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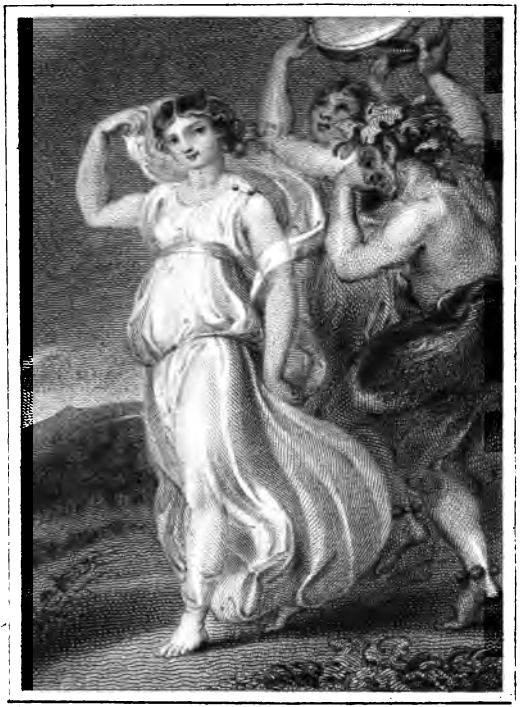
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J. Stothard, R.A. del.ᵗ R. H. Cromek, Sc.

Haste thee, Nymph, and bring with thee
Jest and youthful Jollity

Pub.ᵈ Oct.ʳ 1.1799. by F.dw.ᵈ Harding 98. Pall Mall.

COMUS,

A MASK:

PRESENTED AT LUDLOW CASTLE 1634,

BEFORE

THE EARL OF BRIDGEWATER,

THEN PRESIDENT OF WALES.

By JOHN MILTON.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

L'ALLEGRO AND IL PENSEROSO,

AND

MR. WARTON'S ACCOUNT

OF THE

ORIGIN OF COMUS.

THE HARP OF ORPHEUS WAS NOT MORE CHARMING.

Milton's Tractate of Education.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY T. BENSLEY,

Bolt Court, Fleet Street;

FOR E. HARDING, PALL MALL; AND W. WEST,

PATERNOSTER ROW.

1799.


BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA



LUDLOW CASTLE

LUDLOW CASTLE.

Some idea of this venerable and magnificent pile, in which Comus was played with great splendour, at a period when masques were the most fashionable entertainment of our nobility, will probably gratify those, says Mr. Warton,[a] who read Milton with that curiosity which results from taste and imagination. The learned author of this elegant remark declines entering into the more obscure and early annals of the Castle; to which therefore I will briefly refer,[b] trusting that the methodical account of an edifice, more particularly ennobled by the representation of Comus within its walls, may not be improper, nor uninteresting.

[a] See Mr. Warton's Milton, 2d ed. p. 123.

[b] See Stukeley's Itinerary, Buck's Antiquities, Grose's Antiq. art. Ludlow Castle. An historical Account of Ludlow Castle, by W. Hodges, attorney at law, 1794. Another Account published in the same year, by Mr. Thomas. And the Ludlow Guide, by Mr. Price, 2d ed. 1797.

It was built by Roger de Montgomery, who was related to William the Conqueror. The date of its erection is fixed by Mr. Warton in the year 1112. By others it is said to have been erected before the conquest, and its founder to have been Edric Sylvaticus, Earl of Shrewsbury, whom Roger de Montgomery was sent by the Conqueror into the Marches of Wales to subdue, and with whose estates in Salop he was afterwards rewarded. But the testimonies of various writers assign the foundation of this structure to Roger de Montgomery, soon after the Conquest.

The son of this nobleman did not long enjoy it, as he died in the prime of life. The grandson, Robert de Belesme, Earl of Shrewsbury, forfeited it to Henry I. by having joined the party of Robert Duke of Normandy against that king. It became now a princely residence, and was guarded by a numerous garrison. Soon after the accession of Stephen, however, the governor betrayed his trust, in joining the Empress Maud. Stephen besieged it; in which endeavour to regain possession of his fortress some writers assert that he succeeded, others that he failed. The most generally received opinion is, that the governor, repenting of his baseness, and wishing to obtain the king's forgive-

ness, proposed a capitulation advantageous to the garrison, to which Stephen, despairing of winning the castle by arms, readily acceded. Henry II. presented it to his favourite, Fulk Fitz-Warine, or de Dinan, to whom succeeded Joccas de Dinan; between whom and Hugh de Mortimer Lord of Wigmore such dissensions arose, as at length occasioned the seizure of Mortimer, and his confinement in one of the towers of the Castle, which to this day is called Mortimer's Tower;[c] from which he was not liberated till he had paid an immense ransom.

It was again belonging to the crown in the eighth year of King John, who bestowed it on Philip de Albani, from whom it descended to the Lacies of Ireland, the last of which family, Walter de Lacy, dying without issue male, left the Castle to his grand-daughter Maud, the wife of Peter de Geneva, or Jeneville, a Poictevin of the house of Lorrain, from whose posterity it passed by a daughter to the Mortimers, and from them hereditarily to the crown. In the reign of Henry III. it was taken by Simon de Montfort Earl of Leicester, the ambitious leader of the confederate

[c] Now inhabited, and used as a fives-court.

barons, who, about the year 1263, are said to have taken possession of all the royal castles and fortresses. Of Ludlow Castle, in almost two succeeding centuries, nothing is recorded.

In the thirteenth year of Henry VI. it was in the possession of Richard Duke of York, who there drew up his declaration of affected allegiance to the king, pretending that the army of ten thousand men, which he had raised in the Marches of Wales, was "for the public weale of the realme." The event of this commotion between the royalists and Yorkists, the defeat of Richard's perfidious attempt, is well known. The Castle of Ludlow, says Hall, "was spoyled." The king's troops seized on whatever was valuable in it; and, according to the same chronicler, hither "the King "sent the Duchess of York, with her two younger "sons, to be kept in ward, with the Duchess of "Buckingham her sister, where she continued a "certain space." The castle was soon afterwards put into the possession of Edward Duke of York, afterwards King Edward IV. who at that time resided in the neighbouring Castle of Wigmore, and who, in order to revenge the death of his father, had collected some troops in the Marches, and had attached the garrison to his cause. On

his accession to the throne, the Castle was repaired by him, and a few years afterwards was made the court of his son,[d] the Prince of Wales; who was sent hither by him, as Hall relates, "for "justice to be doen in the Marches of Wales, to "the end that by the authoritie of his presence, "the wild Welshmenne and evill disposed per-"sonnes should refraine from their accustomed "murthers and outrages." Sir Henry Sidney, some years afterwards, observed,[e] that, since the establishment of the Lord President and Council, the whole country of Wales had been brought from their disobedient and barbarous incivility, to a civil and obedient condition; and the bordering English counties had been freed from those spoils and felonies with which the Welsh, before this

[d] "As touching the first Councel established in the "Marches of Wales, it is conceived by the best and most "probable opinions among antiquaries, that the same be-"gan in or about 17° Edward IV. when as Prince Edward "his son was sent into the Marches of Wales, under the "tuition of the Lord Rivers, his unckle by the mother's side, "at what time also John [Alcock] Bishop of Worcester "was appointed Lord President of Wales." Percy Enderbie's Cambria Triumphans, fol. 1661, p. 343.

[e] See Sidney State Papers, vol. i. p. 1.

institution, had annoyed them.[f] On the death of Edward, his eldest son was here first proclaimed king by the name of Edward V. The young monarch and his brother were, however, soon[g] sent for from the Castle, by their dissembling uncle, the tyrant Richard, who soon removed these innocent obstacles to his ambition, by the most foul and unnatural murder.

In the reign of Henry VII. his eldest son, Arthur Prince of Wales, inhabited the Castle, in which great festivity was observed upon his marriage with Catherine of Arragon; an event that was soon followed, within the same walls, by the untimely and lamented death of that accomplished prince.

[f] See Speed's Hist. of Great Britaine, p. 884. And compare Shakspeare, Richard III. act ii. scene ii. where Buckingham says,

> Me seemeth good, that, with some little train,
> Forthwith from Ludlow the young prince be fetch'd
> Hither to London, to be crown'd our king.

[g] See Mr. Warton's second edit. p. 124, who quotes D. Powell's Hist. of Cambria, ed. 1580, 4to. p. 401. Sir H. Sidney, however, was made Lord President in the second year of Elizabeth, which was in 1559. See Sidney State Papers, vol. i. Memoirs prefixed, p. 86.

The Castle had now long been the palace of the Prince of Wales, annexed to the principality, and was the habitation appointed for his deputies, the Lords Presidents of Wales, who held in it the Court of the Marches. It would therefore hardly have been supposed, that its external splendour should have suffered neglect, if Powell, the Welsh historian, had not related, that "Sir Henry Sidney, who was made Lord President in 1564, "repaired the Castle of Ludlowe, which is the "cheefest house within the Marches, being in "great decaie, as the chapell, the court-house, "and a faire fountaine." Sir Henry's [h] munificence to this stately fabric is more particularly recorded by T. Churchyard, in his poem called "The Worthines of Wales," 4to. Lond. 1578. The chapter is entitled "The Castle of Ludloe," in which it is related, that "Sir Harry built many "things here worthie praise and memorie." From the same information we learn the following particulars. "Over a chimney excellently wrought "in the best chamber, is St. Andrewes Crosse

[h] See also Sidney State Papers, volume i. page 144, where Sir Henry relates the situation of Ludlow Castle, &c.

" joyned to Prince Arthurs armes in the hall win-
" dowe."

" Prince Arthurs armes is there well wrought in stone,
" (A worthie worke, that fewe or none may mend)
" This worke not such, that it may passe alone:
" For as the tyme did alwaies people send
" To world, that might exceede in wit and spreete;
" So sondrie sorts of works are in that seate,
" That for so hye a stately place is meete:—
" In it besides, (the works are here unnam'd)
" A chappell is, most trim and costly sure"—

About which " are armes in colours of sondrie " kings, but chiefly noblemen[1]." He then specifies in prose, " that Sir Harry Sidney being Lord

[1] Viz. Of the following persons, " gallantly and cunningly set out."

" Sir Walter Lacie
Jeffrey Genyvile
Roger Mortymer
Leonell Duke of Clarence
Edmond Earle of Marchy
Richard Earle of Cambridge
Richard Duke of Yorke
Edward IV.
Henry VII.
Henry VIII.
W. Smith, Bishop of Lincolne, Lord President of Wales
Jeff Blythe, Bp. of Coventrie and Litchfield, L. P.
R. Lee, Bp. of Coventrie and Litchfield, L. P.
J. Vessie, Bp. of Exeter, L. P.
R. Sampson, Bp. of Coventrie and Litchfield, L. P.

" President, buylt twelve roumes in the sayd Cas-
" tle, which goodly buildings doth shewe a great
" beautie to the same. He made also a goodly
" wardrobe underneath the new parlor, and re-
" payred an old tower, called Mortymer's Tower,
" to keepe the auncient records in the same; and
" he repayred a fayre roume under the court-
" house, to the same entent and purpose, and

J. Dudley, Earle of Warwick, L. P.
Sir William Harbert, L. P.
N. Heath, Bp. of Worcester, L. P.
Gil. Browne [Bourne], Bp. of Bath and Wells, L. P.
Lord Williams of Tame, L.P.
Sir Harry Sidney, L. P.
Sir A. Corbet, Knt. Vice-President
Sir Tho. Dynham, Knt.
J. Scory, Bishop of Hartford [Hereford]
N. Bullingham, Bp. of Worcester
N. Robinson, Bp. of Bangor
R. Davies, Bp. of St. David's
T. Davies, Bp. of St. Asaph
Sir J. Crofts, Knt. Controller
Sir J. Throgmorton, Knt. &c.
Sir Hugh Cholmley, Knt.
Sir Nich. Arnold, Knt.
Sir G. Bromley, Knt. &c.
Wm. Gerrard, Lord Chauncellor of Ireland, &c.
Charles Foxe, Esquier and Secretorie
Ellice Price, Doctor of the Lawe
Edward Leighton, Esq.
Richard Seborne, Esq.
Richard Pates, Esq.
Rafe Barton, Esq.
George Phetyplace, Esq.
William Leighton, Esq.
Myles Sandys, Esq."

" made a great wall about the woodyard, and " built a most brave condit within the inner " court: and all the newe buildings over the gate " Sir Harry Sidney (in his daies and governement " there) made and set out to the honour of the " Queene, and glorie of the Castle. There are " in a goodly or stately place set out my Lord " Earle of Warwicks armes, the Earle of Darbie, " the Earle of Worcester, the Earle of Pembroke, " and Sir Harry Sidneys armes in like maner: al " these stand on the left hand of the chamber. " On the other side are the arms of Northwales " and Southwales, two red lyons and two golden " lyons, Prince Arthurs. At the end of the dyn- " ing chamber, there is a pretie device[k] how the " hedgehog brake the chayne, and came from Ire- " land to Ludloe. There is in the hall a great grate " of iron of a huge height."—Sir Henry Sidney caused also many salutary regulations[l] to be made in the court.

[k] " Device of the Lord President." Two Porcupines were the ancient crest of the Sidneys.

[l] See Sidney State Papers, vol. i. p. 143. " Sir Henry " Sydney to the Lords of the Councell, with his opinion for " reformation of the disorders in the marches of Wales:" in which are stated the great sums of money he had ex-

In 1616 the creation of Prince Charles (afterwards King Charles I.) to the Principality of Wales, and Earldom of Chester, was celebrated here with uncommon magnificence. It became next distinguished by "one of the most memor-"able and honourable circumstances in the course "of its history[m]," the representation of COMUS in 1634, when the Earl of Bridgewater was Lord President, and inhabited it. A scene in the Mask presented both the Castle and the Town of Ludlow. Afterwards, as I have been informed, Charles the First, going to pay a visit at Powis Castle, was here splendidly received and entertained, on his journey. But "pomp, and feast, "and revelry, with mask, and antique pageantry," were soon succeeded in Ludlow Castle by the din

pended, and the indefatigable diligence he had exerted in the discharge of his office.

See also, in consequence of his care, "Orders sett "downe by the Queenes most excellent Majestie, with th[e] "advice of her Previe Counsell, for the direction and re-"formacion of her Highnes Courte in the Marches of "Wales, an. 1576." Sidney State Papers, vol. i. p. 170, &c.

[m] See Mr. Warton's 2d ed. p. 125.

of arms. During the unhappy civil war it was garrisoned for the King. In the summer of 1645, a force of near 2000 horse and foot, drawn together out of the garrisons of Ludlow, Hereford, Worcester, and Monmouth, were by a less number of the rebels[n] defeated near Ludlow. The Castle was at length delivered up to the Parliament on the 9th of June 1646.

No other remarkable circumstances distinguish the history of this Castle, till the Court of the Marches was abolished, and the Lords Presidents were discontinued, in 1688. From that period its decay commenced. It has since been gradually stripped of its curious and valuable ornaments. No longer inhabited by its noble guardians, it has fallen into neglect; and neglect has [o]encouraged

[n] See Sir E. Walker's Hist. Discourses, fol. p. 129.

[o] "It will be no wonder that this noble Castle is in the "very perfection of decay, when we acquaint our readers, "that the present inhabitants live upon the sale of the ma-"terials. All the fine courts, the royal apartments, halls, "and rooms of state, lie open and abandoned, and some "of them falling down." Tour through Great Britain, quoted by Grose, art. Ludlow Castle.

See also two remarkable instances related by Mr. Hodge in his Account of the Castle, p. 39.

plunder. The appointment of a governor,[p] or steward of the Castle, is also at present discontinued. Butler enjoyed the stewardship, which was a lucrative as well as an honourable post, while the principality court existed. And, in an apartment over the gateway of the Castle, that inimitably facetious poet wrote the first part of Hudibras.[q]

In the account of Ludlow Castle, prefixed to Buck's Antiquities, published in 1774, which must have been written many years before, it is said, "Many of the royal apartments are yet entire; "and the sword, with the velvet hangings, and "some of the furniture, are still preserved." And Grose in his Antiquities, published about the same time, extracting from the Tour through Great Britain what he pronounces a very just and accurate account of this Castle, represents the chapel having abundance of coats of arms upon the pannels,

[p] When Mr. Grose published his Antiquities, "a sort of "governor," he says, "was still appointed to the Castle." But see Mr. Hodges's Account, p. 44.

[q] Buck's Antiquities, vol. ii. p. 3. Mr. Hodges, in his Account of Ludlow Castle, observes more generally, that "it was in one of the outer towers of this Castle that Butler "wrote his incomparable Hudibras," p. 42.

and the hall decorated with the same ornaments, together with lances, spears, firelocks, and old armour. Of these curious appendages to the grandeur of both, little perhaps is now known. Of the chapel, a circular building within the inner court is now all that remains. Over several of the stable doors, however, are still the arms of Queen Elizabeth, and the Earl of Pembroke. Over the inner gate of the Castle are also some remains of the arms of the Sidney family, with an inscription, denoting the date of the Queen's reign, and of Sir Henry Sidney's residence, in 1581, together with the following words:[r] "Hominibus ingratis loquimini "lapides." No reason has been assigned for this remarkable address. Perhaps Sir Henry Sidney might intend it as an allusion to his predecessors, who had suffered the stately fabric to decay; as a memorial also, which no successor might behold without determining to avoid its application:— "Nonne ipsam domum metuet, ne quam vocem "eliciat, nonne parietes conscios?"[s]

[r] See Mr. Hodges's Account of the Castle, page 29; The Ludlow Guide, p. 32; and Harl. MSS. 6121. fol. 40.

[s] Cicero pro Cælio, sect. 25.

A gentleman,[t] who visited the Castle in 1768, has acquainted me, that the floors of the great council chamber were then pretty entire, as was the stair-case. The covered steps leading to the chapel were remaining, but the covering of the chapel was fallen: yet the arms of some of the Lords Presidents, painted on the walls, were visible. In the great council chamber was inscribed on the wall a sentence from 1 Sam. xii. 3, all of which are now wholly gone. The person who shewed this gentleman the Castle, informed him that, by tradition, the Mask of Comus was performed in the council chamber.[u]

From the valuable collections of the same gentleman I have been also favoured with several curious extracts, relating to the earliest history of the Castle, and to its connexion with the history of the Marches. The Welsh,[x] or Ancient Britons, were never wholly conquered, but were by degrees at length driven into the mountainous and inac-

[t] Mr. Dovaston, of the Nursery, near Oswestry.

[u] Mr. Warton says in the hall, or in one of the great chambers, 2d ed. p. 124.

[x] An Account of Ludlow Town and Castle, from the most early times to the first year of William and Mary, copied by Mr. Dovaston from a MS. of the Rev. Richard

cessible part of this island, whence, under their kings and princes, they made frequent incursions on the bordering inhabitants; which was the occasion of this and many other castles to be built for the defence of the country against the Welsh. Several towns and castles on the frontiers of Wales were built about the time of the Norman conquest; from which, it has been also said,[y] that the possessors frequently sallied into the low or flat countries, and exceedingly molested the Welsh.

When[z] the title of Mercia was extinguished in the monarchy of the whole isle, the name, from the nature of the thing, was still retained in the counties bordering upon Wales and Scotland, from the known Saxon word Mearc, signifying a note, or mark, and by way of common speaking at last applied to boundaries of counties. Hence came the title of Lords Marchers, who procured their seigniories by right of conquest, having an authority from the king for that end: for[a] the kings

Podmore, A. B. rector of Coppenhall, in co. pal. of Chester, and curate of Cundover, Salop, collected with great care from ancient and authentic books.

y Owen's British Remains, 8vo. Lond. 1777, p. 10.

z Mr. Dovaston's MS.

a Owen's British Remains, p. 8.

of England, perceiving the difficulty of effecting the conquest of Wales by any great army, offered to several English nobility and gentry the grant of such countries as they could, win by their own force and expence, from their enemies the Welsh. They also permitted them and their heirs to hold the land conquered of the crown, freely, per baroniam, with the exercise of royal jurisdiction therein.[b] They were therefore styled Lords, or Barons Marchers.[c] But the foundation of their title was by assumption and permission, and not by grant: for no record[d] of any grant having been given to a Lord of the Marches, to possess the authority annexed to that dignity, is to be found in the Tower, or in other parts of England. The tenure of these conquered lands, however, was precarious; as it frequently happened, that those

[b] The Lords of the Marches held under the kings of England, by the tenure of serving in wars with a certain number of their vassals, and of furnishing their castles with strong garrisons, and with all military implements. They possessed in all cases, except the power of granting pardons for treason, Jure regalia. See Warrington's Hist. of Wales, 2d ed. vol. i. p. 370, 380.

[c] Owen's Brit. Rem. p. 8.

[d] Ibid. p. 9.

estates[e] of which they had taken possession were recovered by the Welsh, either by composition with the kings of England, or by the power of arms. In the Marches bordering upon England the frequent disputes between the Welsh and English occasioned implacable hostilities, and produced lamentable effects, until the abolition of the regal jurisdiction in the Lords[f] Marchers. Henry VII. who had been peculiarly attached to the prosperity of Wales, as well on account of his birth and education in the county of Pembroke, as of his near descent from that county, applied himself to effect, what he did effect in part, and what his son Henry VIII. completed, the junction of these lordships with the property of the crown, and the happy incorporation of Wales with England.

The court of the President and Council of the Marches was erected by King Edward IV. in honour of the Earls of March, from whom he was descended, as the court of the Duchy of Lancaster had been before by King Henry IV. in honour of the house of Lancaster.[g]

e Warrington's Hist. of Wales, 3d ed. vol. i. p. 378.
f Owen's Brit. Rem. p. 20.
g Mr. Dovaston's MS.

The court acted by commission and instructions [h] from the king, from the time of its institution till the making of the statute in the twenty-seventh year of Henry VIII. by which "the do-"mynion, countrey, and pryncipalitie of Wales, "and divers Marches, were divided into xii shires, "whereof viii were antient counties, and iiii new "made counties. And the statutes, an. 31, 33, 34, "and 35 Hen. VIII. are recitals and declarations "of that statute, viz. That there shall be and re-"mayn a Lord President and Counsaill, &c. with "all officers and incidents, &c. in manner and "forme as it had been before that tyme used and "accustomed.[i]" There had been also the seal of the Marches, which was laid aside by statute 4th Hen. VII. whereby it was enacted, that all grants and writings pertaining to the Earldom of March should be under the broad seal, and not under a special seal; for this had been a privilege annexed to the estate and possessions of the Mortimers,

[h] See Cambria Triumphans, fol. 1661, p. 347.

[i] Sidney State Papers, vol. i. p. 1. Sir Henry Sidney's Collections "touching the Antiquitie, Aucthoritie, and Ju-"risdiccion of the Lord President and Councell of the "Marches of Wales."

Earls of March, from whom Edward IV. was descended, and was then abrogated.[k] Beside the officers of the court, there is extant a list of the knights and esquires appointed by Henry VII. in the Marches of Wales "to gyff attendance with "soche nombre of hable persons defensibly, as "they may make to assist the King's Commission-"ers at Lodelow, from tyme to tyme, and to have "such fees as hereafter ensueth." For the county of Salop, Sir Robert Corbet, Sir Tho. Leighton, Sir Tho. Cornwall, Sir Tho. Blount: the fee of each was 6*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.* Tho. Skreven, Tho. Kynaston, Tho. Mylton, Wm. Leighton, Geo. Mainwaring: the fee of these was 100*s.*[l]

Amongst other instructions in the 44th year of Queen Elizabeth to Edward Lord Zouch, Lord President, is the following. "And further her "Majesties pleasure is, that there shall be one "learned minister allowed, being a graduate in "divinity, or a master of arts, and not haveing "any benefice with cure of souls, to preach and "read the common prayer for the Lord President "and the whole household, and shall be always "resident with the said Council, and shall have

[k] Mr. Dovaston's MS. [l] Ibid.

" the yearly fee of 60*l.* with diet for himself and " one servant, and not to be absent to serve any " cure or function."

The Lord President had an allowance to live in great state and grandeur, and had a numerous household to attend him. The other officers of the court had fees and salaries suitable to their several ranks.[m]

This court[n] was dissolved by act of parliament in the first year of William and Mary, at the humble suit of all the gentlemen and inhabitants

[m] Mr. Dovaston's MS. And see Sidney State Papers, vol. i. p. 5, 6, where " the Fees annually allowed to the " Cownsell and Commissioners, and the Officers Waiges," An. 3 Edw. VI. are set forth.

[n] The Court consisted of the Lord President, Vice-President, and Council, who were composed of the Lord Chancellor, Lord Treasurer, Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal, Lord Treasurer of the King's Household, Chancellor of the Exchequer, principal Secretary of State, the Chief Justices of England, and of the Common Pleas, the Chief Baron of the Exchequer, the Justices of Assize for the counties of Salop, Glocester, Hereford, and Monmouth, the Justices of the Grand Session in Wales, the Chief Justice of Chester, Attorney and Solicitor General, with many of the neighbouring Nobility; and with various subordinate officers. See Mr. Hodges's Hist. Account of the Castle, p. 67, 68.

of the principality of Wales; by whom it was represented as an intolerable grievance. The first Lord President was the Lord Rivers,° 13 Edw. IV. and the last was the Earl of Macclesfield.

° Mr. Dovaston's MS. See also note[d] in p. 5, in which the Bishop of Worcester is called Lord President. Lord Rivers perhaps might have vacated the Presidentship in the 17th year of Edward IV. The following list of Lords Presidents contains all whom I have hitherto found appointed to that office.

Anthony Lord Rivers, 13 An. Ed. IV. from Mr. Dovaston's MS.

John Alcock, Bishop of Worcester, about 1478, afterwards Bishop of Ely: he died in 1500.

William Smith, Bishop of Lincoln: he died in 1513.

Geoffrey Blythe, Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry: he died in 1533.

John Voysey, or Vessey, Bishop of Exeter.

Rowl. Lee, Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry.

Richard Sampson, Bishop of Chichester, afterwards of Lichfield and Coventry.

John Dudley, Earl of Warwick, afterwards Duke of Northumberland, who was beheaded in 1553.

Sir William Herbert, afterwards Earl of Pembroke, in 1549.

Nicholas Heath, Bishop of Worcester, afterwards Abp. of York, was appointed in the first year of Q. Mary.

Sir William Herbert was soon afterwards re-appointed, and continued Lord President till the 6th of Q. Mary.

The situation of the Castle is delightful.P It is built in the north-west angle of the town, upon a rock, commanding an extensive and beautiful prospect northward. On the west it is shaded by

Gilbert Bourne, Bishop of Bath and Wells, then held the office till Mary's death.
Sir John Williams, Lord Williams of Thame, co. of Oxon, on the accession of Queen Elizabeth: he died in the first year of her reign.
Sir Henry Sidney, in the 2d of Elizabeth: he died, in 1586, at Ludlow.
Henry Earl of Pembroke, son-in-law to Sir Henry Sidney.
Edward Lord Zouch, who appears from Mr. Dovaston's MS. to have been Lord President in 1602.
Ralph Lord Eure, in 1610.
William Lord Compton, afterwards Earl of Northampton, 1617.
John Earl of Bridgewater, 1631, from Mr. Dovaston's MS.
Prince Rupert.
Richard Lord Vaughan, Earl of Carbery.
Henry Marquis of Worcester, afterwards Duke of Beaufort.
Sir John Bridgeman.
Charles Earl of Macclesfield.

P So Churchyard describes it:

"It stands right well, and pleasant to the view,
"With sweet prospect, yea all the field about."

The Lords of the Marches, selecting the most agreeable and fertile parts of their territories, erected castles for their own residence, and towns for the accommodation of their sol-

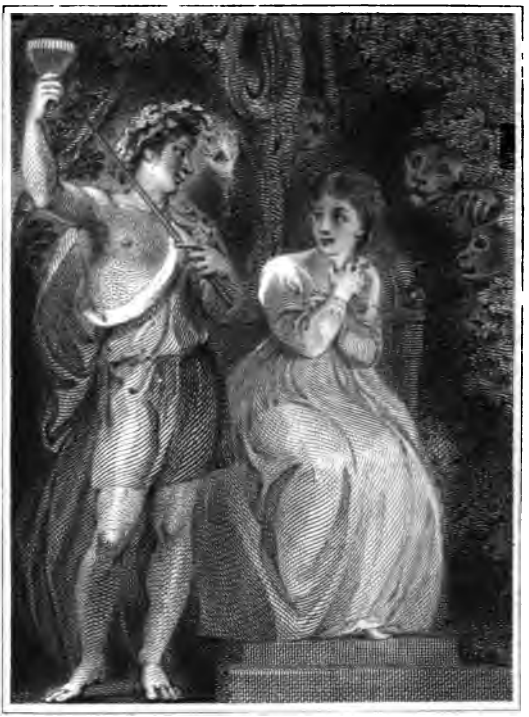
a lofty hill, and washed by the river. It is strongly environed by walls of immense height and thickness, and fortified with round and square towers at irregular distances. The walls[q] are said to have formerly been a mile in compass; but Leland in that measure includes those of the town. The interior apartments were defended on one side by a deep ditch, cut out of the rock; on the other, by an almost inaccessible precipice overlooking the vale of Corve. The Castle was divided into two separate parts: the castle, properly speaking, in which were the palace and lodgings; and the green, or outwork, which Dr. Stukeley supposes to have been called the Barbican.[r] The green takes in a large compass of ground, in which were the court of judicature and records, the stables, garden, bowling-green, and other offices. In the front of the castle, a spacious plain or lawn formerly extended two miles. In 1772[s] a public walk round the Castle was planted with trees, and

diers. It was in this manner that most of the present towns and castles on the frontier of Wales were built. Warrington's Hist. of Wales, 3d ed. vol. i. p. 379.

[q] Grose's Antiquities.

[r] Itinerary, Iter. iv. p. 79.

[s] Hodges's Hist. Acc. p. 54.



J. Pethard R.A. del.ᵗ R.H. Cromek, sculp.ᵗ

one sip of this
Will bathe the drooping spirits in delight
Beyond the bliss of dreams. Be wise & Taste.

Pub.ᵈ 1 Oct. 1799 by Edw.ᵈ Harding 98 Pall Mall

laid out with much taste, by the munificence of the Countess of Powis.

The exterior appearance of this ancient edifice bespeaks, in some degree, what it once has been. Its mutilated towers and walls still afford some idea of the strength and beauty which so noble a specimen of Norman architecture formerly displayed. In contemplating its ruin, however, sensations of regret and indignation will arise: for the Castle is now a melancholy monument, exhibiting the irreparable effects of remorseless pillage and unregarded dilapidation. DR. TODD.

ORIGIN OF COMUS.

In Fletcher's Faithful Shepherdess, an Arcadian comedy, recently published,[a] Milton found many touches of pastoral and superstitious imagery, congenial with his own conceptions. Many of these, yet with the highest improvements, he has transferred in Comus, together with the general cast and colouring of the piece. He catched also from the lyric rhymes of Fletcher, that "Dorique delicacy," with which Sir Henry Wotton was so much delighted in the songs of Milton's drama. Fletcher's comedy was coldly received the first night of its performance: but it had ample revenge in this

[a] The third edition of Fletcher's play was published in 1633. The first quarto was published during his life-time; the second is dated 1629, four years after his decease. See Colman's Beaumont and Fletcher, vol. iii. pp. 113. 145. The Faithful Shepherdess is mentioned in Davies's Scourge of Folly, 1611. See Warton's Note on Comus, v. 934.—Dr. Todd.

conspicuous and indisputable mark of Milton's approbation. It was afterwards represented as a mask at court, before the king and queen on twelf-night, in 1633. I know not, indeed, if this was any recommendation to Milton, who, in the Paradise Lost, speaks contemptuously of these interludes, which had been among the chief diversions of an elegant and liberal monarch. B. iv. 767.

..... Court-amours,
Mix'd dance, and wanton Mask, or midnight ball, &c.

And in his Ready and easy Way to establish a free Commonwealth, written 1660, on the Inconveniencies and Dangers of re-admitting Kingship, and with a view to counteract the noxious Humour of returning to Bondage, he says, "a king "must be adored as a demi-god, with a dissolute "and haughty court about him, of vast expence "and luxury, Masks and Revels, to the debauch-"ing our prime gentry, both male and female, "not in their pastimes only," &c. Pr.W. i. 590. I believe the whole compliment was paid to the genius of Fletcher. But in the mean time it should be remembered, that Milton had not yet contracted an aversion to courts and court-amusements; and that in L'Allegro, Masks are among

his pleasures.[b] Nor could he now disapprove of a species of entertainment to which, as a writer, he

[b] Masks, but without any display of dramatic wit or character, may be traced back to the early part of Henry the Eighth's reign, in which they were often performed by the king and his courtiers. Hollingshed and Hall, speaking of the first entertainment of this kind, relate, that "the "king with eleven others were disguised after the manner "of Italie, called a Maske, a thing not seen afore in Eng-"lande." Mr. Warton is of opinion, that these Maskings most probably came to the English, if from Italie, through the Medium of France. Hist. Eng. Poetry, 2d ed. vol. i. 239, note. Their chief aim at this period seems to have been, to surprise, by the ridiculous and exaggerated oddity of the visors, and by the singularity and splendour of the dresses which the maskers wore. Every thing was out of nature and propriety. Ibid. vol. iii. 157. They seem to fall under that description of a Masquerade ("to denote which "no better word could hardly be invented, than Γοργειο-"φορια") which is given in the singular title to a copy of Greek Elegiac Verses, printed at Petersburgh, in the year 1780, and addressed to Prince Potemkin:

Επιγραμμα επι της θαμφους και χαρμοσυνω ΓΟΡΓΕΙΟΦΟ-ΡΙΑΣ, της κοινοτερως ΜΑΣΚΑΡΑΔΟΣ καλουμενης, υπ κ. τ. λ.

Thus englished, A Poem, on the splendid and delightful Festivity, where they wear Gorgonian Visors, more commonly called a Masquerade, which Prince Potemkin celebrated, &c. Harris's Phil. Inquiries, Appendix, p. 567.—

was giving encouragement. The royal masks, however, did not, like Comus, always abound

The Mask was also frequently attended with an exhibition of some gorgeous machinery, resembling the wonders of a modern pantomime. See Hist. Eng. Poetry, vol. iii. 157. Masks were probably distinguished by no other characteristics, till the reign of Elizabeth, when they assumed a dramatic form. The virtues and vices personified were admitted into them, and they exhibited a species of allegory not dissimilar to that which existed in those popular dramas, the old Moralities. "Even after the people had been "accustomed to tragedies and comedies, Moralities still "kept their ground: one of them, intitled The New Cus-"tom, was printed so late as 1573: at length they assumed "the name of Masques, and, with some classical improve-"ments, became in the two following reigns the favourite "entertainments of the court." On the Orig. of the Eng. Stage in Percy's Reliques of Ancient Poetry, vol. i. 140, ed. 1794. They were also the usual performances at princely nuptials, at the entertainment of foreign nobility, and at various public ceremonies, particularly at festivals by the societies of the Inns of Court. Many of Ben Jonson's Masques were presented on Twelfth-night, it being a custom to have plays at court in the Christmas holy-days, and especially on that festival. The title of Shakspeare's Comedy, Twelfth Night, it is supposed, might have been owing to its first exhibition at this season. See Malone's Shakspeare, ed. 1790, vol. i. p. i. 380; and Steevens's, ed. 1793, vol. i. 608. Many elegancies of poetic imagery

with platonic recommendations of the doctrine of chastity.

and diction may be found in some of these entertainments. Among the more eminently beautiful, Mr. Warton places Browne's Inner Temple Masque (Hist. Eng. Poet. vol. ii. 401); to which he supposes Milton may have been indebted in Comus. Some, however, not possessed of native charms, were indebted for the approbation they experienced to the aids of music, dancing, and machinery. And some could expect " to please and sate the curious taste" by the introduction of such fantastic personages as Wassal, Mumming, Minced Pye, and Babie Cake. See Jonson's Masque of Christmas, 1616.

Queen Elizabeth was often entertained by her nobility with splendid Masks, of which none were more remarkable than those at Kenelworth Castle in Warwickshire, by the Earl of Leicester, in 1575, and at Wanstead-house in Essex, by the same nobleman, in May 1578, when the Mask was named The Lady of the May, and was written by that accomplished gentleman, Sir Philip Sidney. Perhaps I may be excused, if I lengthen the note by giving an extract or two from this Mask, which may remind the reader of a pleasant character on the modern stage, the Lingo of the Agreeable Surprise. Rombus (for that is the name of Sir P. Sidney's pedant) thus introduces himself to the Queen: " I am, *potentissima domina*, a school-master, that is to say, " a pedagogue, one not a little versed in the disciplinating " of the juvenal frie, &c. Yet hath not the pulcritude of " my virtues protected mee from the contaminating hands

The ingenious and accurate Mr. Reed has pointed out a rude outline, from which Milton

" of these plebeians; for coming *solummodo* to have parted " their sanguinolent fray, they yielded mee no more reve- " rence, then if I had been some *pecorius asinus*. I, even I, " that am; who am I? *Dixi, verbus sapiento satum est!*"— Like Lingo, who, if I remember right, reflects on the ignorance of the unhappy clowns, who know nothing, nor won't be learned, Rombus also exclaims, " *Ehem, hei, in-* " *sipidum, incitium vulgorum et populorum!* Why, you brute " Nebulons, have you had my *corpusculum* so long among " you, and cannot yet tell how to edifie an argument?"— Holofernes, in Love's Labour's Lost, has been supposed by Mr. Capell to bear a faint resemblance to Rombus.

The great passion for these dramatic performances in the two succeeding reigns has been remarked by an acute writer: " It was the fashion," he says, " for the nobility " to celebrate their weddings, birth-days, and other occa- " sions of rejoicing, with Masks and interludes, which were " exhibited with surprising expence; that great architect, " Inigo Jones, being frequently employed to furnish deco- " rations with all the magnificence of his invention." Dodsley's Preface to his Collect. of Old Plays. In the reign of James, his Queen " had given countenance to this practice " [at court], and, I believe, she is the first of our Queens " that appeared personnally in this most elegant and ra- " tional entertainment of a court." Hist. Eng. Poet. vol. ii. 401. In the following reign, " the king and his lords, " the queen and her ladies, frequently performed in these

seems partly to have sketched the plan of the fable of Comus. See Biograph. Dramat. ii. p. 441. It

"Masques at court, and all the nobility in their own private "houses: in short, no public entertainment was thought "complete without them; and to this humour it is we "owe, and perhaps 'tis all we owe it, the inimitable "Masque at Ludlow Castle." Dodsley ut supr. Puritanism, which had taken great offence at Shirley's Mask, in 1633, as it advanced in strength, "more openly opposed "them, as wicked and diabolical;" and, at length, "Crom-"well's usurpation put an end to them."

About the year 1675 a feeble effort was made to revive these liberal and elegant amusements at Whitehall. Queen Catherine ordered Crowne to write a Pastoral called Calisto, which was acted at court by the ladies Mary and Anne, daughters of the Duke of York, and the young nobility. About the same time lady Anne, afterwards Queen, performed the part of Semandra, in Lee's Mithridates. Hist. Eng. Poet. vol. ii. 402, note. At the marriage of James Duke of Hamilton and Lady Anne Cochran, Feb. 11, 1723, this celebrity was renewed in the performance of a Mask, intitled The Nuptials, which was written by Allan Ramsay. An ingenious unknown friend in England, complimented the Scottish bard, on "his revival of a good old "form of poetry, in high repute with us." See the introduction prefixed to the Mask. The same writer, having observed that the original of Masks might be an imitation of the Interludes of the ancients, and having highly commended Ramsay for his noble and successful attempt to re-

is an old play, with this title, "The Old Wives "Tale, a pleasant conceited comedie, plaid by "the Queenes Maiesties players. Written by "G. P.[c] [i. e. George Peele.] Printed at Lon-

vive this kind of poesy, gives the joint opinion of Addison and himself respecting Comus: "the best Mask ever writ-"ten was that of Milton, in the praise of which no words "can be too many: and I remember to have heard the "late excellent Mr. Addison agree with me in that opi-"nion." Another grand Mask, intitled Alfred, and written by Thomson and Mallet, may be mentioned. See Biog. Dram. vol. ii. p. 8. It was performed on the 1st of August 1740, in the gardens of Cliefden, in commemoration of the accession of George I. and in honour of the birth-day of the princess of Brunswick; the prince and princess of Wales, and all their court, being present. Dr. Todd.

[c] George Peele, the author of the Old Wiues Tale, was a native of Devonshire, and a student of Christ Church, Oxford, where he became a master of arts in 1579. At the university he was much esteemed for his poetical talents. Going to London, he was made conductor of the city pageants: hence he seems to have got a connexion with the stage. He was one of the wits of the town, and his "Merrie Iests" appeared 1607. Reprinted 1627. Mr. Steevens justly supposes, that the character of George Pieboard, in the Puritan, was designed for George Peele. See Malone's Suppl. Shaksp. ii. 587. He has some few pastoral pieces in England's Helicon. He dedicated a poem called the Honour

" don by John Danter, and are to be sold by Ralph " Hancocke and John Hardie, 1595." In quarto. This very scarce and curious piece exhibits, among other parallel incidents, two Brothers wandering in quest of their Sister, whom an Enchanter had

of the Garter, to the Earl of Northumberland, by whom he was patronised in 1593. He wrote also, among other things, Polyhymnia, the description of a Tylt exhibited before the queen, 1590. As to his plays, beside the Old Wiues Tale, 1595, he wrote The Arraignment of Paris, 1584. — Edward the First, 1593. — King David and Fair Bethsabe, 1599. — And The Turkish Mahomet and Hyren [Irene] the Faire Greek, never printed. See Malone, ut supr. vol. i. 191. Of his popularity, and in various kinds of poetry, see Mere's Wit's Treasury, 1598, 12mo. p. 282. 283. 285. And Nash's Epistle to the Gentlemen Students of both Universities, prefixed to Greene's Arcadia, 4to. bl. let. He lived on the Bank-side, opposite to Black Friars, and died, in want and obscurity, of a disease, which Wood says is incident to poets, about the year 1597. He was a favourite dramatic poet; and his plays continued to be acted with applause long after his death. A man of Peele's profession, situation, and character, must have left many more plays, at least interludes, than are now remembered even by name only. His Old Wiues Tale, which is unrecited by Wood, and of which the industrious Langbaine appears to have known nothing more than the title, had sunk into total oblivion. WARTON.

imprisoned. This magician had learned his art from his mother Meroe, as Comus had been instructed by his mother Circe. The Brothers call out on the lady's name, and Echo replies. The Enchanter had given her a potion which suspends the powers of reason, and superinduces oblivion of herself. The Brothers afterwards meet with an Old Man who is also skilled in magic; and by listening to his soothsayings, they recover their lost Sister: but not till the Enchanter's wreath had been torn from his head, his sword wrested from his hand, a glass broken, and a light extinguished. The names of some of the characters, as Sacrapant, Chorebus, and others, are taken from the Orlando Furioso. The history of Meroe, a witch, may be seen in "The xi Bookes of the "Golden Asse, containing the Metamorphosie "of Lucius Apuleius, interlaced with sundrie "pleasant and delectable Tales, &c. Translated "out of Latin into English by William Adling-"ton, Lond. 1566." See chap. iii. "How So-"crates in his returne from Macedony to La-"rissa was spoyled and robbed, and how he fell "acquainted with one Meroe a witch." And, chap. iv. "How Meroe the witch turned divers "persons into miserable beasts." Of this book

there were other editions, in 1571, 1596, 1600, and 1639; all in quarto, and the black letter. The translator was of University College. See also Apuleius in the original. A Meroe is mentioned by Ausonius, Epigr. xix.

Peele's play opens thus.

Anticke, Frolicke, and Fantasticke, three adventurers, are lost in a wood, in the night. They agree to sing the old song,

" Three merrie men, and three merrie men,
" And three merrie men be wee;
" I in the wood, and thou on the ground,
" And Jacke sleeps in the tree." [d]

They hear a dog, and fancy themselves to be near some village. A cottager appears, with a lantern:

[d] This old ballad is alluded to in Twelfth Night, a. ii. s. iii. Sir Toby says, " My lady's a Catalan, we are poli- " ticians, Malvolio's a Peg a Ramsey, and " three merry " men be we." Again, in the comedy of Ram Alley, 1611. See Reed's Old Pl. vol. v. p. 437. And in the Preface to the Shoemaker's Holiday, 1610, 4to. bl. let. " The merriments " that passed in Eyre's house and other accidents; with " two merry three mens songs." And in the comedy of Laugh and Lie Down, 1605, signat. E. 5. " He plaied such " a song of the three merry men," &c. Many more instances occur. WARTON.

on which Frolicke says, "I perceiue the glimryng "of a gloworme, a candle, or a cats-eye," &c. They intreat him to shew the way, otherwise, they say, "wee are like to wander among the owlets "and hobgoblins of the forest." He invites them to his cottage; and orders his wife to "lay a crab "in the fire, to rost for lambes-wool," &c. They sing,

"When as the rie reach to the chin,
"And chopcherrie, chopcherrie ripe within;
"Strawberries swimming in the creame,
"And schoole-boyes playing in the streame," &c.

At length, to pass the time trimly, it is proposed that the wife shall tell "a merry winters tale," or "an old wiues winters tale," of which sort of stories she is not without a score.[e] She begins:—

[e] See Shakspeare's Winter's Tale, a. ii. s. i.

H. .... Pray you sit by us,
And tell us a tale. *M.* Merry or sad shall't be?...
.... A sad tale's best for winter:
I have one of sprights and goblins ....

There is an entry in the register of the stationers, of "A "Book intitled a Wynter Nyghts Pastyme, May 22, 1594." This is not Shakspeare's Winter's Tale, which perhaps did not appear till after 1600. WARTON.

There was a king, or duke, who had a most beautiful daughter, and she was stolen away by a necromancer, who, turning himself into a dragon, carried her in his mouth to his castle. The king sent out all his men to find his daughter; "at "last, all the king's men went out so long, that "his Two Brothers went to seeke hir." Immediately the two Brothers enter, and speak,

"1 *Br.* Vpon these chalkie cliffs of Albion,
"We are arriued now with tedious toile, &c.
"To seeke our sister," &c. . . . .

A Soothsayer enters, with whom they converse about the lost lady. "*Sooths.* Was she fayre? "2 *Br.* The fayrest for white and the purest for "redde, as the blood of the deare or the driven "snowe," &c. In their search, Echo replies to their call.[f] They find too late that their Sister is under the captivity of a wicked magician, and that she had tasted his cup of oblivion. In the close, after the wreath is torn from the magician's head, and he is disarmed and killed, by a Spirit in the shape and character of a beautiful page of fifteen years old, she still remains subject to the magician's inchantment. But in a subse-

[f] See Reed's Old Plays, vi. 426. xii. 401. WARTON.

quent scene the Spirit enters, and declares, that the Sister cannot be delivered but by a lady, who is neither maid, wife, nor widow. The Spirit blows a magical horn, and the Lady appears; she dissolves the charm, by breaking a glass, and extinguishing a light, as I have before recited. A curtain is withdrawn, and the Sister is seen seated and asleep. She is disenchanted and restored to her senses, having been spoken to thrice. She then rejoins her two Brothers, with whom she returns home; and the boy-spirit vanishes under the earth. The magician is here called "inchanter vile," as in Comus, v. 907.

There is another circumstance in this play, taken from the old English Apuleius. It is where the old man every night is transformed by our magician into a bear, recovering in the day-time his natural shape.

Among the many feats of magic in this play, a bride newly married gains a marriage portion by dipping a pitcher into a well. As she dips, there is a voice:

"Faire maiden, white and red,
"Combe me smoothe, and stroke my head,
"And thou shalt haue some cockell bread!
"Gently dippe, but not too deepe,
"For feare thou make the golden beard to weepe!

" Thine maiden, white and redde,
" Combe me smooth, and stroke my head;
" And euery haire a sheaue shall be,
" And euery sheaue a golden tree!"

With this stage direction, " A head comes vp full " of gold; she combes it into her lap."

I must not omit, that Shakspeare seems also to have had an eye on this play. It is in the scene where " The Haruest-men enter with a " song." Again, " Enter the Haruest-men sing- " ing, with women in their handes." Frolicke says, " Who have we here, our amourous haruest- " starres?" They sing,

" Loe, here we come a reaping a reaping,
" To reape our haruest-fruite;
" And thus we passe the yeare so long,
" And neuer be we mute."

Compare the Masque in the Tempest, a. iv. s. i. where Iris says,

" You sun-burnt sicklemen, of August weary,
" Come hither from the furrow, and be merry;
" Make holy-day: your rye-straw hats put on,
" And these fresh nymphs encounter every one
" In country footing.

Where is this stage-direction, " Enter certain " Reapers, probably habited: they join with the

"nymphs in a graceful dance." The Tempest probably did not appear before the year 1612.

That Milton had his eye on this ancient drama, which might have been the favourite of his early youth, perhaps it may be at least affirmed with as much credibility, as that he conceived the Paradise Lost, from seeing a mystery at Florence, written by Andreini a Florentine in 1617, entitled Adamo.

In the mean time it must be confessed, that Milton's magician Comus, with his cup and wand, is ultimately founded on the fable of Circe. The effects of both characters are much the same. They are both to be opposed at first with force and violence. Circe is subdued by the virtues of the herb moly, which Mercury gives to Ulysses, and Comus by the plant haemony, which the Spirit gives to the Two Brothers. About the year 1615, a Masque called the Inner Temple Masque, written by William Browne, author of Britannia's Pastorals, which I have frequently cited, was presented by the students of the Inner Temple. It has been lately printed from a manuscript in the library of Emanuel College: but I have been informed, that a few copies were printed soon after the presentation. It was formed on the story of

Circe, and perhaps might have suggested some few hints to Milton.

The genius of the best poets is often determined, if not directed, by circumstance and accident. It is natural, that even so original a writer as Milton should have been biassed by the reigning poetry of the day, by the composition most in fashion, and by subjects recently brought forward, but soon giving way to others, and almost as soon totally neglected and forgotten.

WARTON.

C O M U S.

THE PERSONS.

THE ATTENDANT SPIRIT, AFTERWARDS IN THE HABIT OF THYRSIS.

COMUS WITH HIS CREW.

THE LADY.

FIRST BROTHER.

SECOND BROTHER.

SABRINA THE NYMPH.

THE CHIEF PERSONS, WHO PRESENTED, WERE

THE LORD BRACKLEY.

MR. THOMAS EGERTON, HIS BROTHER.

THE LADY ALICE EGERTON.

COMUS.

THE FIRST SCENE DISCOVERS A WILD WOOD.

The Attendant Spirit descends or enters.

BEFORE the starry threshold of Jove's court
My mansion is, where those immortal shapes
Of bright aerial spirits live inspher'd
In regions mild of calm and serene air,
Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot,
Which men call Earth, and, with low-thoughted care
Confin'd and pester'd in this pin-fold here,
Strive to keep up a frail and feverish being,
Unmindful of the crown that virtue gives,
After this mortal change, to her true servants,
Amongst the enthron'd gods on sainted seats.
Yet some there be, that by due steps aspire
To lay their just hands on that golden key
That opes the palace of Eternity:
To such my errand is; and, but for such,

I would not soil these pure ambrosial weeds
With the rank vapours of this sin-worn mould.
But to my task. Neptune, besides the sway
Of every salt flood, and each ebbing stream,
Took in by lot 'twixt high and nether Jove
Imperial rule of all the sea-girt isles,
That like to rich and various gems inlay
The unadorned bosom of the deep:
Which he, to grace his tributary gods,
By course commits to several government,
And gives them leave to wear their saphire crowns,
And wield their little tridents: but this isle,
The greatest and the best of all the main,
He quarters to his blue-hair'd deities;
And all this tract that fronts the falling sun
A noble peer of mickle trust and power
Has in his charge, with temper'd awe to guide
An old and haughty nation, proud in arms:
Where his fair offspring, nurs'd in princely lore,
Are coming to attend their father's state,
And new-intrusted scepter: but their way
Lies through the perplex'd paths of this drear wood,
The nodding horror of whose shady brows
Threats the forlorn and wand'ring passenger;
And here their tender age might suffer peril,
But that by quick command from sovran Jove.

I was dispatch'd for their defence and guard;
And listen why, for I will tell ye now
What never yet was heard in tale or song,
From old or modern bard, in hall or bower.
Bacchus, that first from out the purple grape
Crush'd the sweet poison of misused wine,
After the Tuscan mariners transform'd,
Coasting the Tyrrhene shore, as the winds listed,
On Circe's island fell: (Who knows not Circe,
The daughter of the Sun, whose charmed cup
Whoever tasted, lost his upright shape,
And downward fell into a groveling swine?)
This nymph, that gaz'd upon his clust'ring locks,
With ivy berries wreath'd, and his blithe youth,
Had by him, ere he parted thence, a son
Much like his father, but his mother more,
Whom therefore she brought up, and Comus nam'd:
Who, ripe and frolic of his full grown age,
Roving the Celtic and Iberian fields,
At last betakes him to this ominous wood,
And, in thick shelter of black shades imbower'd,
Excels his mother at her mighty art,
Offering to every weary traveller
His orient liquor in a crystal glass,
To quench the drought of Phœbus, which as they
taste,

(For most do taste through fond intemperate thirst)
Soon as the potion works, their human countenance,
Th' express resemblance of the gods, is chang'd
Into some brutish form of wolf, or bear,
Or ounce, or tiger, hog, or bearded goat,
All other parts remaining as they were;
And they, so perfect is their misery,
Not once perceive their foul disfigurement,
But boast themselves more comely than before,
And all their friends and native home forget,
To roll with pleasure in a sensual sty.
Therefore, when any favour'd of high Jove
Chances to pass through this advent'rous glade,
Swift as the sparkle of a glancing star
I shoot from heav'n, to give him safe convoy,
As now I do: But first I must put off
These my sky robes spun out of Iris' woof,
And take the weeds and likeness of a swain
That to the service of this house belongs,
Who with his soft pipe, and smooth-ditty'd song,
Well knows to still the wild winds when they roar,
And hush the waving woods; nor of less faith,
And in this office of his mountain watch,
Likeliest, and nearest to the present aid
Of this occasion. But I hear the tread
Of hateful steps; I must be viewless now.

COMUS *enters with a charming rod in one hand, his glass in the other; with him a rout of Monsters, headed like sundry sorts of wild beasts, but otherwise like men and women, their apparel glistering; they come in making a riotous and unruly noise, with torches in their hands.*

Comus. The star that bids the shepherd fold,
Now the top of heav'n doth hold;
And the gilded car of day
His glowing axle doth allay
In the steep Atlantic stream;
And the slope sun his upward beam
Shoots against the dusky pole,
Pacing toward the other goal
Of his chamber in the east.
Meanwhile welcome joy and feast,
Midnight shout and revelry,
Tipsy dance and jollity.
Braid your locks with rosy twine,
Dropping odours, dropping wine.
Rigour now is gone to bed,
And advice with scrupulous head.
Strict age and sour severity,
With their grave saws, in slumber lie.

We, that are of purer fire,
Imitate the starry quire,
Who, in their nightly watchful spheres,
Lead in swift round the months and years.
The sounds and seas, with all their finny drove,
Now to the moon in wavering morris move;
And on the tawny sands and shelves
Trip the pert fairies and the dapper elves.
By dimpled brook and fountain brim,
The wood-nymphs, deck'd with daisies trim,
Their merry wakes and pastimes keep;
What hath night to do with sleep?
Night hath better sweets to prove,
Venus now wakes, and wakens Love.
Come, let us our rites begin,
'Tis only day-light that makes sin,
Which these dun shades will ne'er report.
Hail, goddess of nocturnal sport,
Dark-veil'd Cotytto! t'whom the secret flame
Of midnight torches burns; mysterious dame,
That ne'er art call'd, but when the dragon womb
Of Stygian darkness spets her thickest gloom,
And makes one blot of all the air;
Stay thy cloudy ebon chair,
Wherein thou rid'st with Hecat', and befriend
Us thy vow'd priests, till utmost end

Of all thy dues be done, and none left out,
Ere the blabbing eastern scout,
The nice morn, on th' Indian steep
From her cabin'd loop-hole peep,
And to the tell-tale sun descry
Our conceal'd solemnity.
Come, knit hands, and beat the ground
In a light fantastic round.

THE MEASURE.

Break off, break off, I feel the different pace
Of some chaste footing near about this ground.
Run to your shrouds, within these brakes and trees;
Our number may affright: Some virgin sure
(For so I can distinguish by mine art)
Benighted in these woods. Now to my charms,
And to my wily trains; I shall ere long
Be well stock'd with as fair a herd as graz'd
About my mother Circe. Thus I hurl
My dazzling spells into the spungy air,
Of pow'r to cheat the eye with blear illusion,
And give it false presentments, lest the place
And my quaint habits breed astonishment,
And put the damsel to suspicious flight,
Which must not be, for that's against my course:
I, under fair pretence of friendly ends,

And well-plac'd words of glozing courtesy
Baited with reasons not unplausible,
Wind me into the easy-hearted man,
And hug him into snares. When once her eye
Hath met the virtue of this magic dust,
I shall appear some harmless villager,
Whom thrift keeps up about his country gear.
But here she comes; I fairly step aside,
And hearken, if I may, her business here.

The Lady *enters.*

Lady. This way the noise was, if mine ear be true,
My best guide now; methought it was the sound
Of riot and ill-manag'd merriment,
Such as the jocund flute, or gamesome pipe
Stirs up among the loose unletter'd hinds,
When for their teeming flocks, and granges full,
In wanton dance they praise the bounteous Pan,
And thank the gods amiss. I should be loath
To meet the rudeness, and swill'd insolence,
Of such late wassailers; yet, O! where else
Shall I inform my unacquainted feet
In the blind mazes of this tangled wood?
My brothers, when they saw me wearied out
With this long way, resolving here to lodge

Under the spreading favour of these pines,
Step'd, as they said, to the next thicket side
To bring me berries, or such cooling fruit
As the kind hospitable woods provide.
They left me then, when the grey-hooded Ev'n,
Like a sad votarist in palmer's weed,
Rose from the hindmost wheels of Phœbus' wain.
But where they are, and why they came not back,
Is now the labour of my thoughts. 'Tis likeliest
They had engag'd their wand'ring steps too far;
And envious Darkness, ere they could return,
Had stole them from me: else, O thievish Night,
Why shouldst thou, but for some felonious end,
In thy dark lantern thus close up the stars
That Nature hung in heav'n, and fill'd their lamps
With everlasting oil, to give due light
To the misled and lonely traveller?
This is the place, as well as I may guess,
Whence even now the tumult of loud mirth
Was rife, and perfect in my list'ning ear,
Yet nought but single darkness do I find.
What might this be? A thousand fantasies
Begin to throng into my memory,
Of calling shapes, and beck'ning shadows dire,
And airy tongues, that syllable men's names
On sands, and shores, and desert wildernesses.

These thoughts may startle well, but not astound
The virtuous mind, that ever walks attended
By a strong siding champion, Conscience.—
O welcome pure-ey'd Faith, white-handed Hope,
Thou hovering angel, girt with golden wings,
And thou, unblemish'd form of Chastity!
I see ye visibly, and now believe
That He, the Supreme Good, t'whom all things ill
Are but as slavish officers of vengeance,
Would send a glist'ring guardian, if need were,
To keep my life and honour unassail'd.
Was I deceiv'd, or did a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night?
I did not err, there does a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night,
And casts a gleam over this tufted grove:
I cannot hallow to my brothers, but
Such noise as I can make to be heard farthest
I'll venture, for my new enliven'd spirits
Prompt me; and they perhaps are not far off.

SONG.

Sweet Echo, sweetest nymph, that liv'st unseen,
Within thy airy shell,
By slow Meander's margent green,
And in the violet embroider'd vale,

Where the love-lorn nightingale
Nightly to thee her sad song mourneth well;
Canst thou not tell me of a gentle pair
That likest thy Narcissus are?
O, if thou have
Hid them in some flow'ry cave,
Tell me but where,
Sweet queen of parly, daughter of the sphere!
So may'st thou be translated to the skies,
And give resounding grace to all heaven's harmonies.

Enter COMUS.

Com. Can any mortal mixture of earth's mould
Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment?
Sure something holy lodges in that breast,
And with these raptures moves the vocal air
To testify his hidden residence.
How sweetly did they float upon the wings
Of silence, through the empty-vaulted night,
At every fall smoothing the raven down
Of darkness, till it smil'd! I have oft heard
My mother Circe with the Sirens three,
Amidst the flow'ry-kirtled Naiads,
Culling their potent herbs and baleful drugs,
Who, as they sung, would take the prison'd soul,
And lap it in Elysium; Scylla wept,

And chid her barking waves into attention;
And fell Charybdis murmur'd soft applause:
Yet they in pleasing slumber lull'd the sense,
And in sweet madness robb'd it of itself;
But such a sacred and home-felt delight,
Such sober certainty of waking bliss,
I never heard till now. I'll speak to her,
And she shall be my queen. Hail, foreign wonder!
Whom certain these rough shades did never breed,
Unless the goddess that in rural shrine
Dwell'st here with Pan, or Sylvan, by blest song
Forbidding every bleak unkindly fog
To touch the prosperous growth of this tall wood.

Lad. Nay, gentle shepherd, ill is lost that praise,
That is address'd to unattending ears!
Not any boast of skill, but extreme shift
How to regain my sever'd company,
Compell'd me to awake the courteous Echo
To give me answer from her mossy couch.

Com. What chance, good lady, hath bereft you thus?

Lad. Dim darkness, and this leafy labyrinth.

Com. Could that divide you from near-ushering guides?

Lad. They left me weary on a grassy turf.

Com. By falsehood, or discourtesy, or why?

Lad. To seek i' th' valley some cool friendly spring.

Com. And left your fair side all unguarded, lady?

Lad. They were but twain, and promis'd quick return.

Com. Perhaps forestalling night prevented them.

Lad. How easy my misfortune is to hit!

Com. Imports their loss, beside the present need?

Lad. No less than if I should my brothers lose.

Com. Were they of manly prime, or youthful bloom?

Lad. As smooth as Hebe's their unrazor'd lips.

Com. Two such I saw, what time the labour'd ox
In his loose traces from the furrow came,
And the swink'd hedger at his supper sat;
I saw them under a green mantling vine,
That crawls along the side of yon small hill,
Plucking ripe clusters from the tender shoots;
Their port was more than human, as they stood:
I took it for a fairy vision
Of some gay creatures of the element,
That in the colours of the rainbow live,
And play i' th' plighted clouds. I was awe-struck,
And, as I pass'd, I worshipp'd; if those you seek,
It were a journey like the path to heav'n,
To help you find them.

Lad. Gentle villager,
What readiest way would bring me to that place?
Com. Due west it rises from this shrubby point.
Lad. To find out that, good shepherd, I suppose,
In such a scant allowance of star-light,
Would overtask the best land-pilot's art,
Without the sure guess of well-practis'd feet.
Com. I know each lane, and every alley green,
Dingle, or bushy dell, of this wild wood,
And every bosky bourn from side to side,
My daily walks and ancient neighbourhood;
And if you stray-attendance be yet lodg'd,
Or shroud within these limits, I shall know
Ere morrow wake, or the low-roosted lark
From her thatch'd pallet rouse; if otherwise,
I can conduct you, lady, to a low
But loyal cottage, where you may be safe
Till further quest.
Lad. Shepherd, I take thy word,
And trust thy honest offer'd courtesy,
Which oft is sooner found in lowly sheds
With smoky rafters, than in tap'stry halls
In courts of princes, where it first was nam'd,
And yet is most pretended: in a place
Less warranted than this, or less secure,
I cannot be, that I should bear to change it.

Eye me, blest Providence, and square my trial
To my proportion'd strength. Shepherd, lead on.

Enter the two Brothers.

E. Br. Unmuffle, ye faint stars, and thou, fair moon,
That wont'st to love the traveller's benizon,
Stoop thy pale visage through an amber cloud,
And disinherit Chaos, that reigns here
In double night of darkness and of shades;
Or, if your influence be quite damm'd up
With black usurping mists, some gentle taper,
Though a rush-candle from the wicker hole
Of some clay habitation, visit us
With thy long levell'd rule of streaming light;
And thou shalt be our star of Arcady,
Or Tyrian Cynosure.

Sec. Br. Or, if our eyes
Be barr'd that happiness, might we but hear
The folded flocks penn'd in their wattled cotes,
Or sound of pastoral reed with oaten stops,
Or whistle from the lodge, or village cock
Count the night watches to his feathery dames,
'Twould be some solace yet, some little cheering
In this close dungeon of innumerous boughs.

But, O that hapless virgin, our lost sister,
Where may she wander now, whither betake her
From the chill dew, among rude burs and thistles?
Perhaps some cold bank is her bolster now,
Or 'gainst the rugged bark of some broad elm
Leans her unpillow'd head, fraught with sad fears.
What, if in wild amazement and affright?
Or, while we speak, within the direful grasp
Of savage hunger, or of savage heat?

El. Br. Peace, brother; be not over-exquisite
To cast the fashion of uncertain evils:
For grant they be so, while they rest unknown,
What need a man forestall his date of grief,
And run to meet what he would most avoid?
Or if they be but false alarms of fear,
How bitter is such self-delusion?
I do not think my sister so to seek,
Or so unprincipled in Virtue's book,
And the sweet peace that goodness bosoms ever,
As that the single want of light and noise
(Not being in danger, as I trust she is not)
Could stir the constant mood of her calm thoughts,
And put them into misbecoming plight.
Virtue could see to do what Virtue would
By her own radiant light, though sun and moon
Were in the flat sea sunk. And Wisdom's self

Oft seeks to sweet retired Solitude;
Where, with her best nurse, Contemplation,
She plumes her feathers, and lets grow her wings,
That in the various bustle of resort
Were all-to ruffled, and sometimes impair'd.
He, that has light within his own clear breast,
May sit i' th' center, and enjoy bright day:
But he, that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts,
Benighted walks under the mid-day sun;
Himself is his own dungeon.

Sec. Br. 'Tis most true,
That musing Meditation most affects
The pensive secrecy of desert cell,
Far from the cheerful haunt of men and herds,
And sits as safe as in a senate house;
For who would rob a hermit of his weeds,
His few books, or his beads, or maple dish,
Or do his grey hairs any violence?
But Beauty, like the fair Hesperian tree
Laden with blooming gold, had need the guard
Of dragon-watch with unenchanted eye,
To save her blossoms, and defend her fruit
From the rash hand of bold Incontinence.
You may as well spread out the unsunn'd heaps
Of miser's treasure by an outlaw's den,
And tell me it is safe, as bid me hope

Danger will wink on Opportunity,
And let a single helpless maiden pass
Uninjur'd in this wild surrounding waste.
Of night, or loneliness, it recks me not;
I fear the dread events that dog them both,
Lest some ill-greeting touch attempt the person
Of our unowned sister.

El. Br. I do not, brother,
Infer, as if I thought my sister's state
Secure, without all doubt or controversy;
Yet, where an equal poise of hope and fear
Does arbitrate th' event, my nature is
That I incline to hope, rather than fear,
And gladly banish squint suspicion.
My sister is not so defenceless left
As you imagine; she has a hidden strength,
Which you remember not.

Sec. Br. What hidden strength,
Unless the strength of heav'n, if you mean that?

El. Br. I mean that too, but yet a hidden strength,
Which, if heav'n gave it, may be term'd her own:
'Tis Chastity, my brother, Chastity:
She, that has that, is clad in complete steel,
And, like a quiver'd nymph with arrows keen,
May trace huge forests and unharbour'd heaths,
Infamous hills and sandy perilous wilds,

Where, through the sacred rays of Chastity,
No savage fierce, bandite, or mountaineer,
Will dare to soil her virgin purity:
Yea there, where very desolation dwells
By grots and caverns shagg'd with horrid shades,
She may pass on with unblench'd majesty,
Be it not done in pride, or in presumption.
Some say, no evil thing that walks by night,
In fog, or fire, by lake, or moorish fen,
Blue meagre hag, or stubborn unlaid ghost
That breaks his magic chains at curfew time,
No goblin, or swart fairy of the mine,
Hath hurtful pow'r o'er true virginity.
Do ye believe me yet, or shall I call
Antiquity from the old schools of Greece
To testify the arms of Chastity?
Hence had the huntress Dian her dread bow,
Fair silver-shafted queen, for ever chaste,
Wherewith she tam'd the brinded lioness
And spotted mountain pard, but set at nought
The frivolous bolt of Cupid; gods and men
Fear'd her stern frown, and she was queen o' th'
woods.
What was that snaky-headed Gorgon shield,
That wise Minerva wore, unconquer'd virgin,
Wherewith she freez'd her foes to congeal'd stone,

But rigid looks of chaste austerity,
And noble grace that dash'd brute violence
With sudden adoration and blank awe?
So dear to heav'n is saintly Chastity,
That when a soul is found sincerely so,
A thousand liveried angels lacky her,
Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt;
And, in clear dream and solemn vision,
Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear,
Till oft converse with heav'nly habitants
Begin to cast a beam on th' outward shape,
The unpolluted temple of the mind,
And turns it by degrees to the soul's essence,
Till all be made immortal: but when Lust,
By unchaste looks, loose gestures, and foul talk,
But most by lewd and lavish act of sin,
Lets in defilement to the inward parts,
The soul grows clotted by contagion,
Imbodies, and imbrutes, till she quite lose
The divine property of her first being.
Such are those thick and gloomy shadows damp,
Oft seen in charnel vaults and sepulchres
Ling'ring, and sitting by a new-made grave,
As loath to leave the body that it lov'd,
And link'd itself by carnal sensuality
To a degenerate and degraded state.

Sec. Br. How charming is divine Philosophy!
Not harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,
But musical, as is Apollo's lute,
And a perpetual feast of nectar'd sweets,
Where no crude surfeit reigns.
El. Br. List, list, I hear
Some far off halloo break the silent air.
Sec. Br. Methought so too; what should it be?
El. Br. For certain
Either some one like us night-founder'd here,
Or else some neighbour woodman, or, at worst,
Some roving robber calling to his fellows.
Sec. Br. Heav'n keep my sister. Again, again, and near!
Best draw, and stand upon our guard.
El. Br. I'll halloo:
If he be friendly, he comes well; if not,
Defence is a good cause, and heav'n be for us.

Enter the Attendant Spirit, *habited like a shepherd.*

That halloo I should know, what are you? speak;
Come not too near, you fall on iron stakes else.
Spir. What voice is that? my young lord? speak again.
Sec. Br. O brother, 'tis my father's shepherd, sure.

El. Br. Thyrsis? whose artful strains have oft
delay'd
The huddling brook to hear his madrigale,
And sweeten'd every musk-rose of the dale!
How cam'st thou here, good swain? hath any ram
Slipt from the fold, or young kid lost his dam,
Or straggling wether the pent flock forsook?
How couldst thou find this dark sequester'd nook?

Spir. O my lov'd master's heir, and his next joy,
I came not here on such a trivial toy
As a stray'd ewe, or to pursue the stealth
Of pilfering wolf; not all the fleecy wealth
That doth enrich these downs, is worth a thought
To this my errand, and the care it brought.
But, O my virgin lady, where is she?
How chance she is not in your company?

El. Br. To tell thee sadly, shepherd, without
blame,
Or our neglect, we lost her as we came.

Spir. Ah me unhappy! then my fears are true.

El. Br. What fears, good Thyrsis? Pr'ythee,
briefly shew.

Spir. I'll tell ye; 'tis not vain or fabulous,
(Though so esteem'd by shallow ignorance)
What the sage poets, taught by th' heavenly muse,
Story'd of old in high immortal verse,

Of dire chimeras and enchanted isles,
And rifted rocks whose entrance leads to hell;
For such there be, but unbelief is blind.
Within the navel of this hideous wood,
Immur'd in cypress shade, a sorcerer dwells,
Of Bacchus and of Circe born, great Comus,
Deep skill'd in all his mother's witcheries;
And here to every thirsty wanderer
By sly enticement gives his baneful cup,
With many murmurs mixt, whose pleasing poison
The visage quite transforms of him that drinks,
And the inglorious likeness of a beast
Fixes instead, unmoulding reason's mintage
Character'd in the face: this have I learnt
Tending my flocks hard by i' th' hilly crofts,
That brow this bottom-glade, whence night by night
He and his monstrous rout are heard to howl,
Like stabled wolves, or tigers at their prey,
Doing abhorred rites to Hecate
In their obscured haunts of inmost bowers.
Yet have they many baits, and guileful spells,
T' inveigle and invite th' unwary sense
Of them that pass unweeting by the way.
This evening late, by then the chewing flocks
Had ta'en their supper on the savoury herb

Of knot-grass dew-bespent, and were in fold,
I sat me down to watch upon a bank
With ivy canopied, and interwove
With flaunting honey-suckle, and began,
Rapt in a pleasing fit of melancholy,
To meditate my rural minstrelsy,
Till Fancy had her fill; but, ere a close,
The wonted roar was up amidst the woods,
And fill'd the air with barbarous dissonance;
At which I ceas'd, and listen'd them awhile,
Till an unusual stop of sudden silence
Gave respite to the drowsy frighted steeds,
That draw the litter of close-curtain'd Sleep;
At last a soft and solemn breathing sound
Rose like a steam of rich distill'd perfumes,
And stole upon the air, that even Silence
Was took ere she was ware, and wish'd she might
Deny her nature, and be never more,
Still to be so displac'd. I was all ear,
And took in strains that might create a soul
Under the ribs of Death: but, O! ere long
Too well I did perceive it was the voice
Of my most honour'd lady, your dear sister.
Amaz'd I stood, harrow'd with grief and fear;
And, O poor hapless nightingale, thought I,
How sweet thou sing'st, how near the deadly snare!

Then down the lawns I ran with headlong haste,
Through paths and turnings often trod by day,
Till guided by mine ear I found the place,
Where that damn'd wizzard, hid in sly disguise,
(For so by certain signs I knew) had met
Already, ere my best speed could prevent,
The aidless innocent lady his wish'd prey;
Who gently ask'd if he had seen such two,
Supposing him some neighbour villager.
Longer I durst not stay, but soon I guess'd
Ye were the two she meant; with that I sprung
Into swift flight, till I had found you here,
But further know I not.

Sec. Br. O night and shades,
How are ye join'd with hell in triple knot,
Against th' unarm'd weakness of one virgin,
Alone, and helpless! Is this the confidence
You gave me, brother?

El. Br. Yes, and keep it still,
Lean on it safely; not a period
Shall be unsaid for me: against the threats
Of malice or of sorcery, or that power
Which erring men call Chance, this I hold firm,
Virtue may be assail'd, but never hurt,
Surpris'd by unjust force, but not enthrall'd;
Yea, even that, which mischief meant most harm,

Shall in the happy trial prove most glory:
But evil on itself shall back recoil,
And mix no more with goodness, when at last
Gather'd like scum, and settled to itself,
It shall be in eternal restless change
Self-fed, and self-consumed: if this fail,
The pillar'd firmament is rottenness,
And earth's base built on stubble. But come, let's on.
Against th' opposing will and arm of heaven
May never this just sword be lifted up;
But for that damn'd magician, let him be girt
With all the griesly legions that troop
Under the sooty flag of Acheron,
Harpies and Hydras, or all the monstrous forms
'Twixt Africa and Inde, I'll find him out,
And force him to return his purchase back,
Or drag him by the curls to a foul death,
Curs'd as his life.

Spir. Alas! good vent'rous youth,
I love thy courage yet, and bold emprise;
But here thy sword can do thee little stead;
Far other arms, and other weapons must
Be those, that quell the might of hellish charms:
He with his bare wand can unthread thy joints,
And crumble all thy sinews.

El. Br. Why, pr'ythee, shepherd,



R. P. Cromek

Come but keep thy wonted state
With even step and musing gait
And looks commercing with the skies
Thy rapt soul sitting in thine eyes

Pub.d Oct.r 1.1792 by Edw.d Harding 98 Pall Mall

How durst thou then thyself approach so near,
As to make this relation?

Spir. Care, and utmost shifts
How to secure the lady from surprisal,
Brought to my mind a certain shepherd lad,
Of small regard to see to, yet well skill'd
In every virtuous plant and healing herb,
That spreads her verdant leaf to th' morning ray:
He lov'd me well, and oft would beg me sing,
Which when I did, he on the tender grass
Would sit and hearken ev'n to ecstasy,
And in requital ope his leathern scrip,
And show me simples of a thousand names,
Telling their strange and vigorous faculties:
Amongst the rest a small unsightly root,
But of divine effect, he cull'd me out;
The leaf was darkish, and had prickles on it,
But in another country, as he said,
Bore a bright golden flow'r, but not in this soil:
Unknown, and like esteem'd, and the dull swain
Treads on it daily with his clouted shoon:
And yet more med'cinal is it than that Moly,
That Hermes once to wise Ulysses gave;
He call'd it Hæmony, and gave it me,
And bade me keep it as of sov'reign use
'Gainst all enchantments, mildew blast, or damp,
Or ghastly furies' apparition.

I purs'd it up, but little reck'ning made,
Till now that this extremity compell'd:
But now I find it true; for by this means
I knew the foul enchanter though disguis'd,
Enter'd the very lime twigs of his spells,
And yet came off: if you have this about you,
(As I will give you when you go) you may
Boldly assault the necromancer's hall;
Where if he be, with dauntless hardihood,
And brandish'd blade, rush on him, break his glass,
And shed the luscious liquor on the ground,
But seize his wand; though he and his curs'd crew
Fierce sign of battle make, and menace high,
Or like the sons of Vulcan vomit smoke,
Yet will they soon retire, if he but shrink.

El. Br. Thyrsis, lead on apace, I'll follow thee,
And some good angel bear a shield before us.

The Scene changes to a stately palace, set out with all manner of deliciousness: soft music, tables spread with all dainties. COMUS *appears with his rabble, and the* Lady *set in an enchanted chair, to whom he offers his glass, which she puts by, and goes about to rise.*

Com. Nay, lady, sit; if I but wave this wand,
Your nerves are all chain'd up in alabaster,

And you a statue, or, as Daphne was,
Root-bound, that fled Apollo.
Lad. Fool, do not boast,
Thou canst not touch the freedom of my mind
With all thy charms, although this corporal rind
Thou hast immanacled, while Heav'n sees good.
Com. Why are you vex'd, lady? why do you frown?
Here dwell no frowns, nor anger; from these gates
Sorrow flies far: see, here be all the pleasures,
That fancy can beget on youthful thoughts,
When the fresh blood grows lively, and returns
Brisk as the April buds in primrose-season.
And first, behold this cordial julep here,
That flames and dances in his crystal bounds,
With spirits of balm and fragrant syrups mix'd;
Not that Nepenthes, which the wife of Thone
In Egypt gave to Jove-born Helena,
Is of such pow'r to stir up joy as this,
To life so friendly, or so cool to thirst.
Why should you be so cruel to yourself,
And to those dainty limbs, which Nature lent
For gentle usage and soft delicacy?
But you invert the covenants of her trust,
And harshly deal, like an ill borrower,
With that which you receiv'd on other terms;

Scorning the unexemp'd condition,
By which all mortal frailty must subsist,
Refreshment after toil, ease after pain,
That have been tir'd all day without repast,
And timely rest have wanted; but, fair virgin,
This will restore all soon.

Lad. 'Twill not, false traitor,
'Twill not restore the truth and honesty,
That thou hast banish'd from thy tongue with lies.
Was this the cottage, and the safe abode
Thou toldst me of? What grim aspects are these,
These ugly-headed monsters? Mercy guard me!
Hence with thy brew'd enchantments, foul deceiver!
Hast thou betray'd my credulous innocence
With visor'd falsehood and base forgery?
And wouldst thou seek again to trap me here
With lickerish baits, fit to insnare a brute?
Were it a draught for Juno when she banquets,
I would not taste thy treasonous offer; none
But such as are good men can give good things,
And that which is not good, is not delicious
To a well-govern'd and wise appetite.

Com. O foolishness of men! that lend their ears
To those budge doctors of the Stoic fur,
And fetch their precepts from the Cynic tub,

Praising the lean and sallow Abstinence.
Wherefore did Nature pour her bounties forth
With such a full and unwithdrawing hand,
Covering the earth with odours, fruits, and flocks,
Thronging the seas with spawn innumerable,
But all to please and sate the curious taste?
And set to work millions of spinning worms,
That in their green shops weave the smooth-hair'd silk,
To deck her sons; and, that no corner might
Be vacant of her plenty, in her own loins
She hutch'd th' all-worshipp'd ore and precious gems,
To store her children with: if all the world
Should in a fit of temp'rance feed on pulse,
Drink the clear stream, and nothing wear but frieze,
Th' all-giver would be unthank'd, would be unprais'd,
Not half his riches known, and yet despis'd;
And we should serve him as a grudging master,
As a penurious niggard of his wealth;
And live like Nature's bastards, not her sons,
Who would be quite surcharg'd with her own weight,
And strangled with her waste fertility;

Th' earth cumber'd, and the wing'd air dark'd
with plumes,
The herds would over-multitude their lords,
The sea o'erfraught would swell, and th' unsought
diamonds
Would so emblaze the forehead of the deep,
And so bestud with stars, that they below
Would grow inur'd to light, and come at last
To gaze upon the sun with shameless brows.
List, lady; be not coy, and be not cozen'd
With that same vaunted name, virginity.
Beauty is Nature's coin, must not be hoarded,
But must be current; and the good thereof
Consists in mutual and partaken bliss,
Unsavoury in th' enjoyment of itself;
If you let slip time, like a neglected rose
It withers on the stalk with languish'd head.
Beauty is Nature's brag, and must be shown
In courts, at feasts, and high solemnities,
Where most may wonder at the workmanship;
It is for homely features to keep home,
They had their name thence; coarse complexions,
And cheeks of sorry grain, will serve to ply
The sampler, and to tease the housewife's wool.
What need a vermil-tinctur'd lip for that,
Love-darting eyes, or tresses like the morn?

There was another meaning in these gifts,
Think what, and be advis'd, you are but young yet.
Lad. I had not thought to have unlock'd my lips
In this unhallow'd air, but that this juggler
Would think to charm my judgment, as mine eyes,
Obtruding false rules pranck'd in reason's garb.
I hate when Vice can bolt her arguments,
And Virtue has no tongue to check her pride.
Impostor, do not charge most innocent Nature,
As if she would her children should be riotous
With her abundance; she, good cateress,
Means her provision only to the good,
That live according to her sober laws,
And holy dictate of spare Temperance:
If every just man, that now pines with want,
Had but a moderate and beseeming share
Of that which lewdly-pamper'd Luxury
Now heaps upon some few with vast excess,
Nature's full blessings would be well dispens'd
In unsuperfluous even proportion,
And she no whit incumber'd with her store;
And then the giver would be better thank'd,
His praise due paid: for swinish Gluttony
Ne'er looks to heav'n amidst his gorgeous feast,

But with besotted base ingratitude
Crams, and blasphemes his feeder. Shall I go on?
Or have I said enough? To him that dares
Arm his profane tongue with contemptuous words
Against the sun-clad pow'r of Chastity,
Fain would I something say, yet to what end?
Thou hast nor ear nor soul to apprehend
The sublime notion, and high mystery,
That must be utter'd to unfold the sage
And serious doctrine of virginity,
And thou art worthy that thou should'st not know
More happiness than this thy present lot.
Enjoy your dear wit, and gay rhetoric,
That hath so well been taught her dazzling fence,
Thou art not fit to hear thyself convinc'd;
Yet should I try, the uncontrolled worth
Of this pure cause would kindle my rapt spirits
To such a flame of sacred vehemence,
That dumb things would be mov'd to sympathize,
And the brute Earth would lend her nerves, and shake,
Till all thy magic structures, rear'd so high,
Were shatter'd into heaps o'er thy false head.
Com. She fables not; I feel that I do fear
Her words set off by some superior power;
And though not mortal, yet a cold shudd'ring dew

Dips me all o'er, as when the wrath of Jove
Speaks thunder, and the chains of Erebus,
To some of Saturn's crew. I must dissemble,
And try her yet more strongly. Come, no more,
This is mere moral babble, and direct
Against the canon laws of our foundation;
I must not suffer this, yet 'tis but the lees
And settlings of a melancholy blood:
But this will cure all straight; one sip of this
Will bathe the drooping spirits in delight,
Beyond the bliss of dreams. Be wise, and taste.—

The Brothers *rush in with swords drawn, wrest his glass out of his hand, and break it against the ground; his rout make sign of resistance, but are all driven in. The* Attendant Spirit *comes in.*

Spir. What, have you let the false enchanter 'scape?
O ye mistook, ye should have snatch'd his wand,
And bound him fast; without his rod revers'd,
And backward mutters of dissevering power,
We cannot free the lady that sits here
In stony fetters fix'd, and motionless:
Yet stay, be not disturb'd; now I bethink me,
Some other means I have which may be us'd,

Which once of Melibœus old I learn'd,
The soothest shepherd that e'er pip'd on plains.
There is a gentle nymph not far from hence,
That with moist curb sways the smooth Severn stream,
Sabrina is her name, a virgin pure;
Whilom she was the daughter of Locrine,
That had the sceptre from his father Brute.
She, guiltless damsel, flying the mad pursuit
Of her enraged stepdam Guendolen,
Commended her fair innocence to the flood,
That stay'd her flight with his cross-flowing course.
The water-nymphs, that in the bottom play'd,
Held up their pearled wrists, and took her in,
Bearing her straight to aged Nereus' hall,
Who, piteous of her woes, rear'd her lank head,
And gave her to his daughters to imbathe
In nectar'd lavers, strew'd with asphodil,
And through the porch and inlet of each sense
Dropp'd in ambrosial oils, till she reviv'd,
And underwent a quick immortal change,
Made goddess of the river: still she retains
Her maiden gentleness, and oft at eve
Visits the herds along the twilight meadows,
Helping all urchin blasts, and ill-luck signs
That the shrewd meddling elf delights to make,

Which she with precious vial'd liquors heals;
For which the shepherds at their festivals
Carrol her goodness loud in rustic lays,
And throw sweet garland wreaths into her stream
Of pansies, pinks, and gaudy daffodils.
And, as the old swain said, she can unlock
The clasping charm, and thaw the numbing spell,
If she be right invok'd in warbled song;
For maidenhood she loves, and will be swift
To aid a virgin, such as was herself,
In hard-besetting need; this will I try,
And add the power of some adjuring verse.

SONG.

Sabrina fair,
Listen where thou art sitting
Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave,
In twisted braids of lilies knitting
The loose train of thy amber-dropping hair;
Listen for dear honour's sake,
Goddess of the silver lake,
Listen and save.
Listen and appear to us
In name of great Oceanus,
By th' earth shading Neptune's mace,
And Tethys' grave majestic pace,

By hoary Nereus' wrinkled look,
And the Carpathian wizzard's hook,
By scaly Triton's winding shell,
And old soothsaying Glaucus' spell,
By Leucothea's lovely hands,
And her son that rules the strands,
By Thetis' tinsel-slipper'd feet,
And the songs of Sirens sweet,
By dead Parthenope's dear tomb,
And far Ligea's golden comb,
Wherewith she sits on diamond rocks,
Sleeking her soft alluring locks;
By all the nymphs that nightly dance
Upon thy streams with wily glance,
Rise, rise, and heave thy rosy head
From thy coral-paven bed,
And bridle in thy headlong wave,
Till thou our summons answer'd have.
Listen and save.

SABRINA *rises, attended by* Water-Nymphs, *and sings.*

By the rushy-fringed bank,
Where grows the willow, and the osier dank,
My sliding chariot stays,

Thick set with agate, and the azure sheen
Of turkis blue, and emerald green,
That in the channel strays;
Whilst from off the waters fleet
Thus I set my printless feet
O'er the cowslip's velvet head,
That bends not as I tread;
Gentle swain, at thy request
I am here.
Spir. Goddess dear,
We implore thy powerful hand
To undo the charmed band
Of true virgin here distress'd,
Through the force, and through the wile,
Of unbless'd enchanter vile.
Sabr. Shepherd, 'tis my office best
To help insnared chastity:
Brightest lady, look on me;
Thus I sprinkle on thy breast
Drops, that from my fountain pure
I have kept, of precious cure;
Thrice upon thy finger's tip,
Thrice upon thy rubied lip:
Next this marble venom'd seat,
Smear'd with gums of glutinous heat,
I touch with chaste palms moist and cold:—

Now the spell hath lost his hold;
And I must haste ere morning hour
To wait in Amphitrite's bow'r.

SABRINA *descends, and the* Lady *rises out of her seat.*

Spir. Virgin, daughter of Locrine
Sprung of old Anchises' line,
May thy brimmed waves for this
Their full tribute never miss
From a thousand petty rills,
That tumble down the snowy hills:
Summer drought, or singed air,
Never scorch thy tresses fair,
Nor wet October's torrent flood
Thy molten crystal fill with mud;
May thy billows roll ashore
The beryl and the golden ore;
May thy lofty head be crown'd
With many a tower and terrace round,
And here and there thy banks upon
With groves of myrrh and cinnamon.
Come, lady, while Heav'n lends us grace,
Let us fly this cursed place,
Lest the sorcerer us entice
With some other new device.

Not a waste or needless sound,
Till we come to holier ground:
I shall be your faithful guide
Through this gloomy covert wide,
And not many furlongs thence
Is your father's residence,
Where this night are met in state
Many a friend to gratulate
His wish'd presence, and beside
All the swains, that there abide,
With jigs and rural dance resort;
We shall catch them at their sport,
And our sudden coming there
Will double all their mirth and cheer;
Come, let us haste, the stars grow high,
But night sits monarch yet in the mid sky.

The Scene changes, presenting Ludlow Town and the President's Castle; then come in country dancers, after them the Attendant Spirit, *with the two* Brothers, *and the* Lady.

SONG.

Spir. Back, shepherds, back; enough your play.
Till next sun shine holiday:
Here be without duck or nod

Other trippings to be trod
Of lighter toes, and such court guise
As Mercury did first devise,
With the mincing Dryades,
On the lawns and on the leas.

This second Song presents them to their father and mother.

Noble lord, and lady bright,
I have brought ye new delight,
Here behold so goodly grown
Three fair branches of your own;
Heav'n hath timely try'd their youth,
Their faith, their patience, and their truth,
And sent them here through hard essays
With a crown of deathless praise,
To triumph in victorious dance
O'er sensual Folly and Intemperance.

The dances being ended, the Spirit *epiloguizes.*

Spir. To the ocean now I fly,
And those happy climes that lie
Where day never shuts his eye,
Up in the broad fields of the sky:
There I suck the liquid air

All amidst the gardens fair
Of Hesperus, and his daughters three
That sing about the golden tree:
Along the crisped shades and bowers
Revels the spruce and jocund Spring;
The Graces, and the rosy-bosom'd Hours,
Thither all their bounties bring;
There eternal Summer dwells,
And west-winds with musky wing
About the cedar'n alleys fling
Nard and Cassia's balmy smells.
Iris there with humid bow
Waters the odorous banks, that blow
Flowers of more mingled hue
Than her purfled scarf can shew;
And drenches with Elysian dew
(List, mortals, if your ears be true)
Beds of hyacinth and roses,
Where young Adonis oft reposes,
Waxing well of his deep wound
In slumber soft, and on the ground
Sadly sits th' Assyrian queen:
But far above in spangled sheen
Celestial Cupid, her fam'd son, advanc'd,
Holds his dear Psyche sweet entranc'd,
After her wand'ring labours long,

Till free consent the gods among
Make her his eternal bride,
And from her fair unspotted side
Two blissful twins are to be born,
Youth and Joy; so Jove hath sworn.
But now my task is smoothly done,
I can fly, or I can run
Quickly to the green earth's end,
Where the bow'd welkin slow doth bend;
And from thence can soar as soon
To the corners of the moon.
Mortals, that would follow me,
Love Virtue; she alone is free:
She can teach ye how to climb
Higher than the sphery chime;
Or, if Virtue feeble were,
Heaven itself would stoop to her.

THE GENERAL OPINIONS

OF

VARIOUS CRITICS

CONCERNING

THE BEAUTIES AND THE FAULTS

OF

COMUS.

In the peculiar disposition of the story, the sweetness of the numbers, the justness of the expression, and the moral it teaches, there is nothing extant in any language like the Mask of Comus.

TOLAND.

Milton's Juvenile Poems are so no otherwise, than as they were written in his younger years; for their dignity and excellence they are sufficient to have set him among the most celebrated of the poets, even of the ancients themselves: his Mask and Lycidas are perhaps superior to all in their several kinds. RICHARDSON.

Comus is written very much in imitation of Shakspeare's Tempest, and the Faithful Shep-

herdess of Fletcher; and though one of the first, is yet one of the most beautiful of Milton's compositions. NEWTON.

Milton seems in this poem to have imitated Shakspeare's manner more than in any other of his works; and it was very natural for a young author, preparing a piece for the stage, to propose to himself for a pattern the most celebrated master of English dramatic poetry. THYER.

Milton has here more professedly imitated the manner of Shakspeare in his fairy scenes, than in any other of his works: and his poem is much the better for it, not only for the beauty, variety, and novelty of his images, but for a brighter vein of poetry, and an ease and delicacy of expression very superior to his natural manner. WARBURTON.

If this Mask had been revised by Milton, when his ear and judgment were perfectly formed, it had been the most exquisite of all his poems. As it is, there are some puerilities in it, and many inaccuracies of expression and versification. The two editions of his Poems are of 1645 and 1673. In 1645 he was, as he would think, better employed. In 1673 he would condemn himself for having written such a thing as a Mask, especially to a great lord, and a sort of viceroy. HURD.

The greatest of Milton's juvenile performances is the Mask of Comus, in which may very plainly be discovered the dawn or twilight of Paradise Lost. Milton appears to have formed very early that system of diction, and mode of verse, which his maturer judgment approved, and from which he never endeavoured nor desired to deviate.

Nor does Comus afford only a specimen of his language; it exhibits likewise his power of description and his vigour of sentiment, employed in the praise and defence of virtue. A work more truly poetical is rarely found; allusions, images, and descriptive epithets, embellish almost every period with lavish decoration. As a series of lines, therefore, it may be considered as worthy of all the admiration with which the votaries have received it.

As a drama it is deficient. The action is not probable. A masque, in those parts where supernatural intervention is admitted, must indeed be given up to all the freaks of imagination; but, so far as the action is merely human, it ought to be reasonable, which can hardly be said of the conduct of the two brothers, who, when their sister sinks with fatigue in a pathless wilderness, wander both away together in search of berries too

far to find their way back, and leave a helpless lady to all the sadness and danger of solitude. This however is a defect overbalanced by its convenience.

What deserves more reprehension is, that the prologue spoken in the wild wood by the Attendant Spirit is addressed to the audience; a mode of communication so contrary to the nature of dramatic representation, that no precedents can support it.

The discourse of the Spirit is too long; an objection that may be made to almost all the following speeches; they have not the sprightliness of a dialogue animated by reciprocal contention, but seem rather declamations deliberately composed, and formally repeated, on a moral question. The auditor therefore listens as to a lecture, without passion, without anxiety.

The song of Comus has airiness and jollity; but, what may recommend Milton's morals as well as his poetry, the invitations to pleasure are so general, that they excite no distinct images of corrupt enjoyment, and take no dangerous hold on the fancy.

The following soliloquies of Comus and the Lady are elegant, but tedious. The song must

owe much to the voice, if it ever can delight. At last the Brothers enter, with too much tranquillity; and when they have feared lest their sister should be in danger, and hoped that she is not in danger, the elder makes a speech in praise of chastity, and the younger finds how fine it is to be a philosopher.

Then descends the Spirit in form of a shepherd; and the Brother, instead of being in haste to ask his help, praises his singing, and inquires his business in that place. It is remarkable, that at this interview the Brother is taken with a short fit of rhyming. The Spirit relates that the Lady is in the power of Comus; the Brother moralises again; and the Spirit makes a long narration, of no use, because it is false, and therefore unsuitable to a good being.

In all these parts the language is poetical, and the sentiments are generous; but there is something wanting to allure attention.

The dispute between the Lady and Comus is the most animated and affecting scene of the drama, and wants nothing but a brisker reciprocation of objections and replies to invite attention, and detain it.

The songs are vigorous, and full of imagery;

but they are harsh in their diction, and not very musical in their numbers.

Throughout the whole, the figures are too bold, and the language too luxuriant for dialogue. It is a drama in the epic style, inelegantly splendid, and tediously instructive. JOHNSON.

Milton's Comus is, I think, one of the finest productions of modern times; and I don't know whether to admire most the poetry of it, or the philosophy, which is of the noblest kind. The subject of it I like better than that of the Paradise Lost, which, I think, is not human enough to touch the common feelings of humanity, as poetry ought to do; the Divine Personages he has introduced are of too high a kind to act any part in poetry, and the scene of the action is, for the greater part, quite out of nature. But the subject of the Comus is a fine mythological tale, marvellous enough, as all poetical subjects should be, but at the same time human. He begins his piece in the manner of Euripides, and the descending Spirit that prologises, makes the finest and grandest opening of any theatrical piece that I know, ancient or modern. The conduct of the piece is answerable to the beginning, and the versification of it is finely varied by short and long verses, blank

and rhyming, and the sweetest songs that ever were composed; nor do I know any thing in English poetry comparable to it in this respect, except Dryden's Ode on St. Cecilia, which, for the length of the piece, has all the variety of versification that can well be imagined. As to the style of Comus, it is more elevated, I think, than that of any of his writings, and so much above what is written at present, that I am inclined to make the same distinction in the English language, that Homer made of the Greek in his time; and to say, that Milton's language is the language of the gods; whereas we of this age speak and write the language of mere mortal men.

If the Comus was to be properly represented, with all the decorations which it requires, of machinery, scenery, dress, music, and dancing, it would be the finest exhibition that ever was seen upon any modern stage. But I am afraid, with all these, the principal part would be still wanting; I mean, players that could wield the language of Milton, and pronounce those fine periods of his, by which he has contrived to give his poetry the beauty of the finest prose composition, and without which there can be nothing great or noble in composition of any kind. Or if we could find

players who had breath and organs (for these, as well as other things, begin to fail in this generation), and sense and taste enough, properly to pronounce such periods, I doubt it would not be easy to find an audience that could relish them, or perhaps they would not have attention and comprehension sufficient to connect the sense of them, being accustomed to that trim, spruce, short cut of a style, which Tacitus, and his modern imitators, French and English, have made fashionable.

LORD MONBODDO.[a]

[a] I will gratify the reader with additional observations by the same learned pen, with which I was honoured, on my intention of publishing the Mask being made known to his lordship. They increase the value and importance of the criticism, which I have adduced above from the preface to the third volume of Ancient Metaphysics. "The Comus "is a most pleasureable poem, and at the same time moft "philosophical and instructive. From the Comus, and "other rhyming poems which Milton has written, I hold "him to be the beft rhyming poet in English, as well as "the best writer of blank verse: and, in short, I think he "was a man of such genius and learning, that he was not "only a great honour to the English nation, by what he "has written in verse and prose, but to modern times; for "I do not think that there has been any writer in Europe, "since the days of Augustus Cæsar, that can be compared

If I might venture to place Milton's works, according to their degrees of poetic excellence, it should be perhaps in the following order: Paradise Lost, Comus, Samson Agonistes, Lycidas, L'Allegro, Il Penseroso. Dr. J. WARTON.

We must not read Comus with an eye to the stage, or with the expectation of dramatic propriety. Under this restriction the absurdity of the Spirit speaking to an audience in a solitary forest at midnight, and the want of reciprocation in the dialogue, are overlooked. Comus is a suite of speeches, not interesting by discrimination of character; not conveying a variety of incidents, nor

"with him. He has given to his rhyming poetry a va-
"riety by long and short verses, and by rhymes as much
"varied as possible, by distich rhymes, alternate rhymes,
"and rhymes often at the distance of four lines, which al-
"together make such a variety as is not to be found in any
"other rhyming poem, except that short poem of Dry-
"den's upon St. Cecilia's Day. And he has given one va-
"riety to his rhyming verse, that is not to be found even
"in Dryden's Ode; and that is, a change of the measure
"of the verse, from the Iambic, when the accented sylla-
"ble in the foot is last, to the Trochaic, when it is first;
"which changes altogether the flow of the verse, and
"adapts it to subjects very different. Of this there are
"sundry examples in the Comus." DR. TODD.

gradually exciting curiosity; but perpetually attracting attention by sublime sentiment, by fanciful imagery of the richest vein, by an exuberance of picturesque description, poetical allusion, and ornamental expression. While it widely departs from the grotesque anomalies of the mask now in fashion, it does not nearly approach to the natural constitution of a regular play. There is a chastity in the application and conduct of the machinery; and Sabrina is introduced with much address, after the Brothers had imprudently suffered the enchantment of Comus to take effect. This is the first time the old English mask was in some degree reduced to the principles and form of a rational composition; yet still it could not but retain some of its arbitrary peculiarities. The poet had here properly no more to do with the pathos of tragedy, than the character of comedy: nor do I know that he was confined to the usual modes of theatrical interlocution. A great critic observes, that the dispute between the Lady and Comus is the most animated and affecting scene of the piece. Perhaps some other scenes, either consisting only of a soliloquy, or of three or four speeches only, have afforded more true pleasure. The same critic thinks, that in all the moral dia-

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

logue, although the language is poetical, and the sentiments generous, something is still wanting to allure attention. But surely, in such passages, sentiments so generous, and language so poetical, are sufficient to rouse all our feelings. For this reason I cannot admit his position, that Comus is a drama tediously instructive. And if, as he says, to these ethical discussions the auditor listens, as to a lecture, without passion, without anxiety, yet he listens with elevation and delight. The action is said to be improbable, because the Brothers, when their sister sinks with fatigue in a pathless wilderness, wander both away together in search of berries, too far to find their way back, and leave a helpless lady to all the sadness and danger of solitude. But here is no desertion, or neglect of the lady. The Brothers leave their sister under a spreading pine in the forest, fainting for refreshment: they go to procure berries or some other fruit for her immediate relief, and, with great probability, lose their way in going or returning. To say nothing of the poet's art, in making this very natural and simple accident to be productive of the distress which forms the future business and complication of the fable. It is certainly a fault, that the Brothers, although with some in-

dications of anxiety, should enter with so much tranquillity, when their sister is lost, and at leisure pronounce philosophical panegyrics on the mysteries of virginity. But we must not too scrupulously attend to the exigencies of situation, nor suffer ourselves to suppose that we are reading a play, which Milton did not mean to write. These splendid insertions will please, independently of the story, from which however they result; and their elegance and sublimity will overbalance their want of place. In a Greek tragedy, such sentimental harangues, arising from the subject, would have been given to a chorus.

On the whole, whether Comus be, or be not, deficient as a drama, whether it is considered as on epic drama, a series of lines, a mask, or a poem, I am of opinion, that our author is here only inferior to his own Paradise Lost. WARTON.

Milton's Comus is, in my judgment, the most beautiful and perfect poem of that sublime genius. WAKEFIELD.

Perhaps the conduct and conversation of the Brothers may not be altogether indefensible. They have lost their way in a forest at night, and are in "the want of light and noise." It would now be dangerous for them to run about an unknown

wilderness; and, if they should separate, in order to seek their sister, they might lose each other. In the uncertainty of what was their best plan, they therefore naturally wait, expecting to hear perhaps the cry of their lost sister, or some noise to which they would have directed their steps. The Younger Brother anxiously expresses his apprehensions for his sister. The Elder, in reply, trusts that she is not in danger, and, instead of giving way to those fears, which the Younger repeats, expatiates on the strength of chastity; by the illustration of which argument he confidently maintains the hope of their sister's safety, while he beguiles the perplexity of their own situation.

It has been observed,[b] that Comus is not calculated to shine in theatric exhibition for those very reasons which constitute its essential and specific merit. The Pastor Fido of Guarini, which also ravishes the reader,[c] could not succeed upon the stage. It is sufficient, that Comus displays the true sources of poetical delight and moral instruction, in its charming imagery, in its original concep-

[b] See Mr. Warton's Preface to his edition of Milton's Poems.

[c] See Mons. Hedelin's Whole Art of the Stage, b. ii. p. 112.

tions, in its sublime diction, in its virtuous sentiments. Its few inaccuracies weigh but as dust in the balance against its general merit. And, in short (if I may be allowed respectfully to differ from the high authority of a preceding note), I am of opinion, that this pastoral drama is both gracefully splendid, and delightfully instructive.

Dr. Todd.

L'ALLEGRO.

L'ALLEGRO.

HENCE, loathed Melancholy,
Of Cerberus and blackest Midnight born,
In Stygian cave forlorn,
'Mongst horrid shapes, and shrieks, and sights unholy,
Find out some uncouth cell,
Where brooding Darkness spreads his jealous wings,
And the night raven sings;
There under ebon shades and low brow'd rocks,
As ragged as thy locks,
In dark Cimmerian desert ever dwell.
But come thou goddess fair and free,
In heav'n, yclep'd Euphrosyne,
And by men, heart-easing Mirth,
Whom lovely Venus at a birth
With two sister Graces more
To ivy-crowned Bacchus bore;
Or whether (as some sager sing)
The frolic wind that breathes the spring,

Zephyr with Aurora playing,
As he met her once a-Maying,
There on beds of violets blue,
And fresh-blown roses wash'd in dew,
Fill'd her with thee a daughter fair,
So buxom, blithe, and debonair.
Haste thee, nymph, and bring with thee
Jest and youthful Jollity.
Quips and cranks, and wanton wiles,
Nods and becks, and wreathed smiles,
Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,
And love to live in dimple sleek;
Sport that wrinkled Care derides,
And Laughter holding both his sides.
Come, and trip it as you go
On the light fantastic toe,
And in thy right hand lead with thee,
The mountain nymph, sweet Liberty;
And if I give thee honour due,
Mirth, admit me of thy crew
To live with her, and live with thee,
In unreproved pleasures free;
To hear the lark begin his flight,
And singing startle the dull Night,
From his watch-tower in the skies,
Till the dappled Dawn doth rise:

Then to come in spite of Sorrow,
And at my window bid good morrow,
Through the sweet-brier, or the vine,
Or the twisted eglantine;
While the cock with lively din
Scatters the rear of Darkness thin,
And to the stack, or the barn-door,
Stoutly struts his dames before:
Oft list'ning how the hounds and horn
Cheerly rouse the slumb'ring Morn,
From the side of some hoar hill,
Through the high wood echoing shrill:
Some time walking not unseen
By hedge-row elms, on hillocks green,
Right against the eastern gate,
Where the great Sun begins his state,
Rob'd in flames, and amber light,
The clouds in thousand liv'ries dight,
While the plowman near at hand
Whistles o'er the furrow'd land,
And the milk-maid singeth blithe,
And the mower whets his scythe,
And ev'ry shepherd tells his tale
Under the hawthorn in the dale.
Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures
Whilst the landscape round it measures,

Russet lawns, and fallows gray,
Where the nibbling flocks do stray,
Mountains on whose barren breast
The lab'ring clouds do often rest,
Meadows trim with daisies pied,
Shallow brooks and rivers wide.
Towers and battlements it sees
Bosom'd high in tufted trees,
Where perhaps some beauty lies,
The Cynosure of neighb'ring eyes.
Hard by, a cottage chimney smokes,
From betwixt two aged oaks,
Where Corydon and Thyrsis met,
Are at their savoury dinner set
Of herbs, and other country messes,
Which the neat-handed Phillis dresses;
And then in haste her bower she leaves,
With Thestylis to bind the sheaves;
Or if the earlier season lead
To the tann'd haycock in the mead.
Sometimes with secure delight
The upland hamlets will invite,
When the merry bells ring round,
And the jocund rebecks sound
To many a youth and many a maid,
Dancing in the chequer'd shade;

And young and old come forth to play
On a sunshine holiday,
Till the live-long day-light fail;
Then to the spicy nut-brown ale,
With stories told of many a feat,
How fairy Mab the junkets eat;
She was pinch'd, and pull'd, she said;
And he, by friar's lantern led,
Tells how the drudging goblin sweat,
To earn his cream bowl duly set,
When in one night, ere glimpse of morn,
His shadowy flail had thresh'd the corn
That ten day-lab'rers could not end;
Then lies him down the lubbar fiend,
And stretch'd out all the chimney's length,
Basks at the fire his hairy strength,
And crop-full out of doors he flings,
Ere the first cock his matin rings.
Thus done the tales, to bed they creep,
By whisp'ring winds soon lull'd asleep.
Towered cities please us then,
And the busy hum of men,
Where throngs of knights and barons bold,
In weeds of Peace high triumphs hold,
With store of ladies, whose bright eyes
Rain influence, and judge the prize

Of wit, or arms, while both contend
To win her grace, whom all commend.
There let Hymen oft appear
In saffron robe, with taper clear,
And pomp, and feast, and revelry,
With mask and antique pageantry,
Such sights as youthful poets dream
On summer eves by haunted stream.
Then to the well-trod stage anon,
If Jonson's learned sock be on,
Or sweetest Shakspeare, Fancy's child,
Warble his native wood-notes wild.
And ever against eating cares,
Lap me in soft Lydian airs,
Married to immortal verse,
Such as the meeting soul may pierce
In notes with many a winding bout
Of linked sweetness long drawn out,
With wanton heed, and giddy cunning,
The melting voice through mazes running,
Untwisting all the chains that tie
The hidden soul of harmony;
That Orpheus' self may heave his head
From golden slumber on a bed
Of heap'd Elysian flow'rs, and hear
Such strains as would have won the ear

Of Pluto, to have quite set free
His half regain'd Eurydice.
These delights, if thou canst give,
Mirth, with thee I mean to live.

IL PENSEROSO.

IL PENSEROSO.

HENCE, vain deluding Joys,
The brood of Folly without father bred,
How little you bested,
Or fill the fixed mind with all your toys?
Dwell in some idle brain,
And fancies fond with gaudy shapes possess,
As thick and numberless
As the gay motes that people the sun-beams,
Or likeliest hovering dreams,
The fickle pensioners of Morpheus' train.
But hail thou goddess, sage and holy,
Hail divinest Melancholy,
Whose faintly visage is too bright
To hit the sense of human sight,
And therefore to our weaker view
O'erlaid with black, staid Wisdom's hue;

Black, but such as in esteem,
Prince Memnon's sister might beseem,
Or that starr'd Ethiop queen that strove
To set her beauties' praise above
The sea-nymphs, and their pow'rs offended:
Yet thou art higher far descended;
Thee bright-hair'd Vesta long of yore
To solitary Saturn bore;
His daughter she, (in Saturn's reign
Such mixture was not held a stain,)
Oft in glimmering bowers and glades
He met her, and in secret shades
Of woody Ida's inmost grove,
While yet there was no fear of Jove.
Come, pensive Nun, devout and pure,
Sober, stedfast, and demure,
All in a robe of darkest grain,
Flowing with majestic train,
And sable stole of Cyprus lawn,
Over thy decent shoulders drawn.
Come, but keep thy wonted state,
With even step, and musing gait,
And looks commersing with the skies,
Thy rapt soul sitting in thine eyes:
There held in holy passion still,
Forget thyself to marble, till

With a sad leaden downward cast
Thou fix them on the earth as fast:
And join with thee calm Peace, and Quiet,
Spare Fast, that oft with gods doth diet,
And hears the Muses in a ring
Ay round about Jove's altar sing:
And add to these retired Leisure,
That in trim gardens takes his pleasure;
But first, and chiefest, with thee bring
Him that yon soars on golden wing,
Guiding the fiery-wheeled throne,
The cherub Contemplation;
And the mute Silence hist along,
'Less Philomel will deign a song,
In her sweetest, saddest plight,
Smoothing the rugged brow of Night,
While Cynthia checks her dragon yoke,
Gently o'er th' accustom'd oak;
Sweet bird, that shunn'st the noise of folly,
Most musical, most melancholy!
Thee chauntress of the woods among
I woo to hear thy even-song;
And missing thee, I walk unseen
On the dry smooth-shaven green,
To behold the wand'ring moon,
Riding near her highest noon,

Like one that had been led astray
Through the heav'n's wide pathless way,
And oft, as if her head she bow'd,
Stooping through a fleecy cloud.
Oft on a plat of rising ground,
I hear the far-off curfew sound,
Over some wide-water'd shore,
Swinging slow with sullen roar;
Or, if the air will not permit,
Some still removed place will fit,
Where glowing embers through the room
Teach Light to counterfeit a gloom,
Far from all resort of mirth,
Save the cricket on the hearth,
Or the belman's drowsy charm,
To bless the doors from nightly harm:
Or let my lamp at midnight hour
Be seen in some high lonely tow'r,
Where I may oft outwatch the Bear,
With thrice great Hermes, or unsphere
The spirit of Plato to unfold
What worlds, or what vast regions hold
The immortal mind that hath forsook
Her mansion in this fleshy nook:
And of those demons that are found
In fire, air, flood, or under-ground,

Whose power hath a true consent
With planet, or with element.
Sometime let gorgeous Tragedy
In scepter'd pall come sweeping by,
Presenting Thebes', or Pelops' line,
Or the tale of Troy divine,
Or what (though rare) of later age
Ennobled hath the buskin'd stage.
But, O sad virgin, that thy power
Might raise Musæus from his bower,
Or bid the soul of Orpheus sing
Such notes, as warbled to the string,
Drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek,
And made hell grant what Love did seek.
Or call up him that left half told
The story of Cambuscan bold,
Of Camball, and of Algarsise,
And who had Canace to wife,
That own'd the virtuous ring and glass,
And of the wondrous horse of brass
On which the Tartar king did ride;
And if aught else great bards beside
In sage and solemn times have sung,
Of tourneys and of trophies hung,
Of forests, and enchantments drear,
Where more is meant than meets the ear.

Thus Night oft see me in thy pale career,
Till civil-suited Morn appear,
Not trickt and frounct as she was wont
With the Attic boy to hunt,
But kercheft in a comely cloud,
While rocking winds are piping loud,
Or usher'd with a shower still,
When the gust hath blown his fill,
Ending on the rustling leaves,
With minute drops from off the eaves.
And when the sun begins to fling
His flaring beams, me, goddess, bring
To arched walks of twilight groves,
And shadows brown, that Sylvan loves,
Of pine, or monumental oak,
Where the rude axe with heaved stroke
Was never heard the nymphs to daunt,
Or fright them from their hallow'd haunt;
There in close covert by some brook,
Where no profaner eye may look,
Hide me from Day's garnish eye,
While the bee with honied thigh,
That at her flowery work doth sing,
And the waters murmuring,
With such consort as they keep,
Entice the dewy-feather'd sleep:

And let some strange mysterious dream
Wave at his wings in airy stream
Of lively portraiture display'd,
Softly on my eye-lids laid.
And as I wake, sweet music breathe
Above, about, or underneath,
Sent by some spirit to mortals good,
Or th' unseen genius of the wood.
But let my due feet never fail
To walk the studious cloisters pale,
And love the high embowed roof,
With antic pillars, massy proof,
And storied windows richly dight,
Casting a dim religious light.
There let the pealing organ blow
To the full-voic'd quire below,
In service high, and anthems clear,
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,
Dissolve me into ecstasies,
And bring all heav'n before mine eyes.
And may at last my weary age
Find out the peaceful hermitage,
The hairy gown and mossy cell,
Where I may sit and rightly spell
Of ev'ry star that heav'n doth shew,
And ev'ry herb that sips the dew;

Till old Experience do attain
To something like prophetic strain.
These pleasures, Melancholy, give,
And I with thee will choose to live.

THE END.



PRINTED BY T. BENSLEY,
Bolt Court, Fleet Street, London.



